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**Working session 4.**

**Activity of Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the field of Human Rights**

**Mr. Moderator**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Legal reforms for efficient protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms in Azerbaijan as a secular, democratic and legal state are underway.

Obviously, state programs, strategies and national action plans play key role for increasing effectiveness of protection of human rights and organization of these measures more organized.

It is noteworthy that NAP was approved for increasing the effectiveness of human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan and since 2006; the program defines new directions in the concerned area as a continuation of the previous document.

Approval of the third such a human rights document of public importance is very significant for Azerbaijan as a state, having totally 22 year of independence, from the human rights protection perspective.

As a result of democratic and legal reforms in Azerbaijan, institutional mechanisms were created for effective enforcement of human rights.

One of the main pages for creation of human rights protection as a new system is an establishment of the Commissioner' Office in the country, which operates for 11 years.

Taking into account the competences and activity principles of all ombudspersons in the world, Azerbaijani Ombudsman Office stimulates development of the legal consciousness, opinion and culture.

The Commissioner's activities are regulated under the Constitutional Law which has tremendous place in the field of human rights protection and promotion in Azerbaijan.

As a country successfully passed the transition period, today turned to the country determining its own long-term development strategy directions and human rights are one of those directions. Namely, taking into account these factors and as a logical continuation of the reforms made, for increasing effectiveness of protection of human rights and freedoms, developing legal culture, providing sustainability of measures for improvement of legislative framework as well as legal protection system, the country President approved the National Action Program on to raise Effectiveness of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan of by his Decree dated 27 December 2011.

The Program provides goals on holding of complex measures of various directions through development of the concept of state human rights protection, their enforcement, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

Furthermore, the Program provides further development of human rights and freedoms protection system, improving the national legislative framework and taking specific measures for effective promotion of the rights of various groups of population in the country.

During the past period, specific measures for implementation of the provisions of the NAP were held by the corresponding public stakeholders and close cooperation with the civil society.

This should be noted that there was held successful presentation of the NAP in the meeting with the OSCE state members in Vienna, which was arisen great interest by the participating countries. We also submitted the Program to the European Court of Human Rights library.

Furthermore, the Ombudsman Office convened public hearings as well as effective discussions in every urban and rural areas of the country during months of May and June with the self-employment authorities, municipalities, NGOs, mass media, constituency election commissions for promotion and studying the implementation of the mentioned NAP taking into account the upcoming presidential elections and awareness raising on the right to vote of population.

Simultaneously, taking into consideration Article 3.10 of the NAP, the Central Election Commission (CEC) launched specialized training courses for election commissions' employees on the right to vote.

Ombudsman also monitored the open and close places for election campaign approved to be held on 9 October 2013 through mass events during the Presidential Elections.

From the perspective that 18 June is celebrated as a Human Rights Day in Azerbaijan, as every year, this year the period between 18 May-18 June was declared "month long human rights campaign" by the Ombudsman and in the frame of these months range of human rights events were conducted with public stakeholders and civil society institutions.

In addition, during this month long campaign, the Azerbaijani Ombudsman Office jointly with the state support launched XI Baku International Conference of Ombudspersons "Role of New Mechanisms of Sustainable Development Strategies in Protection and Promotion of Human Rights" on 18-20 June 2013. Foreign ombudspersons, UNESCO and representatives of other international organizations participated in this event as well.

I have to note that, the Azerbaijani Ombudsman Office, up to date 11 international conferences of ombudspersons were held in Baku for further advancing the experience on protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms and developing and extending the cooperation with various international organizations in the concerned area. The Ombudsman office took part in several international programs, including the Twinning and TAIEX projects run by EU and the Eastern Partnership.

The Ombudsman operates either as a national human rights institution (NHRI), as an NPM, UPR evaluation, monitoring and coordination functions, also as and an independent monitoring mechanism for the CRPD.

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman office also successfully participates in implementation of the NAPlan for 2012-2015 years on "Promotion of the Open Government" approved by the Presidential Decree of 5 September 2012 as well as the NAPlan on "Fight against Corruption for 2012-2015".

The abovementioned national action plans were adopted with purpose of sustainability of measures taken towards human rights protection, improvement of the relevant legislative and institutional framework, compliance of the activities of state and self employment authorities with open government principles, extension the participation of the civil society in decision making processes and increasing the transparency, and fulfillment of international obligations undertaken by Azerbaijan.

Establishment of Azerbaijani brand ASAN service centers, which operates with purpose of reduction of additional costs of citizens and time waste, respect for ethic norms and kind treatment in relation to citizens, increasing the level of professionalism, strengthening entrust to the state stakeholders, increasing transparency, strengthening the fight against corruption, extension of usage of electronic services and increasing the effectiveness of the institutional reforms in the concerned area and their successful work play important role from the perspective of effective protection of human rights.

Currently, Azerbaijan forwards to a new stage of development. The main goal of this step is to further effective promotion of human rights, bringing welfare of the population into compliance with decent and international standards, also getting new achievements in development of science, culture and all areas of public life.

New created situation of the world set new obligations. From the perspective of carrying out these new obligations and for determining the goals of the perspective development of the country until 2020 and their implementation, the country President approved the Order on Development Concept “Azerbaijan 2020: Look onto Future” dated 29 December 2012.

The chief aim of the Concept is to achieve the development stage characterized by sustainable economic development and high social welfare, good governance and rule of law, full promotion of human rights and freedoms and active participation of the civil society in public life of the country.

The goals of the Development Concept “Azerbaijan 2020: Look onto Future” shows once again that holding large scale measures covering all fields will further promote efficient promotion of human rights, increasing the social-economic situation of the citizens, in general.

Obviously, this year is a year of Presidential Elections in Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman continues to work hard for protection and promotion of human rights, including the right to vote of citizens. Close cooperation with the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan was built and joint training-seminars were conducted on the right to vote.

There were launched workshops and seminars for constituency and precinct election commissions, polling stations were provided with modern office equipment and IT technologies, web-cameras were installed, the guidelines and other publications were prepared by the CEC for observers and the police officers, in line with the Code of Elections and the related guidelines.

These days, Ombudsman received the OSCE ODIHR Election Commission observers delegation who will observe the upcoming Presidential elections to be held in Azerbaijan, discussed the future measures to be taken for ensuring the right to vote and new perspectives of the bilateral cooperation.

I would like to add that from September 23-28, 2013, the Ombudsman Office jointly with the CEC convenes inter-regional awareness raising activities with participation of the executive offices, law enforcement authorities, for constituency and precinct election commissions and society for promotion of the right to vote of people. And will observe elections in commissions and voting stations.

At the same time, as in previous years, the Ombudsman and the staff members will observe these elections.

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman office as a NHRI accredited with A status by the UN OHCHR continues the activities for further ensuring the human rights, improvement the governance, and targeted to stability as well as development using all its potential.

**Thanks for your attention!**