



## PERMANENT MISSION OF NORWAY

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### 16th session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group Review of Azerbaijan, Geneva, 30 April 2013

Mr. President,

Norway thanks the delegation of Azerbaijan for the presentation of the national report.

We are encouraged by Azerbaijan's high level of ratification of human rights treaties. We welcome the presidential approval of a National Action Programme which foresees, inter alia, the implementation of the provisions included in the conventions Azerbaijan has ratified. We look forward to their full implementation, which will serve to improve the human rights situation in Azerbaijan.

Norway aligns itself with the HR committee, the special reporters on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, on freedom of expression, and on human rights defenders, as well as with some of the engaged stakeholders, in expressing concern over certain aspects of the human rights situation in Azerbaijan.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and a precondition for an open, peaceful and stable society. We continue to note with concern that journalists, editors, and human rights defenders operate under difficult conditions, facing pressure in the form of harassment and lawsuits. We **recommend** that Azerbaijan thoroughly and transparently investigate and prosecute all such alleged incidents. We further **recommend** that Azerbaijan abolish relevant articles of the criminal code which effectively serve as defamation provisions.

To enable citizens to exercise their legitimate right to freedom of association, we **recommend** that Azerbaijan remove all legislative and practical obstacles for the registration, funding and work of NGOs in Azerbaijan.

Thank you.

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