



**Statement by Sweden in the
interactive dialogue on Azerbaijan**

*Delivered by Counsellor Anna Jakenberg Brinck
Geneva, April 30, 2013*

Mr President,

Sweden wishes to welcome the delegation of Azerbaijan to the UPR and thank you for taking an active part in this process.

Civil society organizations have voiced grave concern that recent legislation on NGO activities, management and financing will significantly circumscribe the activities of independent non-government organizations. They also point to severe restrictions on the freedom of assembly due to restrictive practices in granting permission to hold public meetings/assemblies and sharply increased penalties for participants in unauthorized demonstrations.

Could the Government of Azerbaijan elaborate on how it intends to reinforce the respect for and application of article 58 of the Republic's Constitution, and ensure the implementation of recommendation A-18 from the Universal Periodic Review in 2009?

The constitution of Azerbaijan guarantees the freedom of expression. Numerous reports, however, indicate that independent media and individual journalists are facing severe restrictions in their possibility to perform their professional duties.

Could the Government elaborate on how it ensures that actions are not taken by agents of public authorities which are in contradiction with the principle of freedom of expression.

Sweden recommends the Government of Azerbaijan to ensure that human rights defenders, lawyers and other civil society actors are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear or threat of reprisal, obstruction or legal and administrative harassment.

In addition, Sweden recommends Azerbaijan to take all necessary steps to fully commit to end impunity for international crimes by acceding to the Rome Statute of the ICC and to fully align its national legislation with all obligations under the Rome Statute.

Thank you Mr President,