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**UPR44 – AZERBAIJAN**

**Statement by Slovakia**

14 November 2023

Mr. President,

We commend the efforts of Azerbaijan to improve the human rights situation, such as the ratification of **Protocol No. 16** to the **Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms**.

However, there are still concerns about the **restriction of civic space and political engagement**. We are alarmed by the continued persecution and arrests of political opponents, human rights defenders, and journalists. This has to stop.

Slovakia, thus, offers the following recommendations to Azerbaijan:

1/ Remove the **excessive restrictions** concerning the **registration** **of** and **access to grants** by **NGOs**.

2/ Properly investigate cases of **torture and ill-treatment** of individuals detained by the police and other armed forces.

3/ Fully guarantee the **freedom of expression** by measures including, but not limited to, aligning all **media legislation** with relevant international human rights standards.

We wish Azerbaijan a successful review.

I thank you, Mr. President.