



## REPORT TO THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

by

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### **1. General Overview**

Since the last report delivered to the Permanent Council in July 2009, the OSCE Office in Baku has continued to engage in a large range of activities within its mandate including extensive project work with Government structures and civil society. In addition to the project activity, the Office has continued to consult closely with the Government and civil society regarding OSCE commitments, increasing as well its positive public visibility.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office H.E. Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Secretary of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan paid an official visit to Azerbaijan on 14-15 February 2010.

#### **Highlights of the Reporting Period**

The reporting period was dominated by **election activities** in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan held Municipal elections on 23 December 2009 which were not observed by the OSCE/ODIHR. Voter turnout was announced at 32.04% and women were elected to 26% of municipal council seats, a six-fold increase over previous years. The ruling New Azerbaijan Party won 66.9%, independent candidates 27.67%, and the remaining eighteen political parties 5.43% of the seats. The authorities and financial means of municipalities in Azerbaijan are relatively limited, therefore public interest in the elections and competition was not high. According to observers, these elections were generally peaceful and better organized particularly due to the simplification of some procedures and modernization of some equipment by the Central Election Commission (CEC). However, the Office received a number of complaints from independent candidates and opposition parties about intimidation of candidates, claims of results falsification, and lack of confidence in the work of election commissions. The Office forwarded all complaints to the CEC which annulled election results in 33 polling stations and took some disciplinary measures in view of numerous violations. In one case, the head of a regional executive authority (governor) was dismissed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for interference in elections. The good communication enjoyed between the Office and the CEC was noteworthy.

Further on during the period, Azerbaijan started preparations for parliamentary elections scheduled for 7 November 2010. The upcoming parliamentary elections are notable in that the first time in 5 years opposition political parties have stated their intention to participate in a national election contest (they boycotted the 2008 Presidential elections).

While some progress has been made in the Country regarding the last OSCE/ODIHR International Election Observation Mission recommendations, there are still significant

recommendations to be addressed, especially with regards to the composition of election commissions, improved access to media for political parties, and implementation of the *Law on Freedom of Assembly*. Indeed, no action was taken towards improving the composition of election commissions with a view to promoting wider public confidence in them, while two seats in the CEC and one seat in each of the 125 regional constituency and 5169 precinct election commissions continue to be boycotted by the opposition. In recent months, political parties and student groups have been prevented from holding public demonstrations in the Baku city center, on the grounds that the proposed venues did not comply with the law. The Office's endeavors to advise and facilitate the authorities in processing applications recently resulted in an agreement with the Baku Executive Authority to establish a joint working group. Also, in spite of an advice from ODIHR to refrain from election legislation amendments before elections, amendments to the election code were introduced by members of Parliament from the ruling New Azerbaijan Party and adopted on 18 June 2010. These amendments, if approved by the President of the Republic, would reduce the length of the official election period from 75 to 60 days, and stop government financial support for candidates. Defenders of these amendments argue that these changes do not contradict with the practice in many European countries.

In the area of **rule of law**, the Government continued its efforts towards addressing shortcomings in the administration of justice and strengthening the judiciary and courts' compliance with fair trial standards. In addition, the authorities granted the Office unimpeded access to persons in custody, in accordance with the Office's mandate and relevant OSCE commitments. Yet certain issues still persist particularly related to judicial independence, equality of arms and the effective implementation of laws.

The adoption of the new *Law on Normative Legislative Acts* on 18 June, even though further expanding the Presidential Administration's legislative initiative, should be considered a step forward in view of the previous laws regulating legislative work.

Further steps have been taken towards the decentralisation of the administration of justice through the amendment of the *Law on Courts and Judges* on 22 June, which abolished the Military Serious Crimes Court and, following the establishment of regional Appeal Courts in 2006, set up Serious Crimes Courts in all regions where appellate courts are currently functioning.

The issuance by the Council of State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan of its first *National Report on the Situation of NGOs* must also be cited as a positive development in fostering transparency regarding NGO activities. Certain problems faced by the NGOs particularly regarding registration and interference issues with the authorities, however, continued.

The new amendments adopted to the *Law on Freedom of Religion* in March 2009 regarding the re-registration of religious communities as of 1 January 2010 raised concerns in some parts of the society, particularly from the implementation point of view.

The **gender perspective** was positively highlighted by the adoption of the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence* in June 2010 (pending Presidential approval). The Office intensively campaigned for this law and was invited to its debate at all stages in the Parliament. ODIHR provided expert opinion on the draft law, and some of its

recommendations were incorporated. Significantly, establishment of support centers for victims of domestic violence have remained in the legislation, along with Government financing of these centers.

The situation of **freedom of the media** continues to have room for significant improvement, and to be a focus of the OSCE Representative for the Freedom of the Media (RFoM). Indeed, tangible efforts are needed to promote a more pluralistic, democratic and professional media environment. One editor and two bloggers known for their critical views currently remain in prison. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) issued a judgment on 22 April 2010 in favor of the editor Eynulla Fatullayev, and found a violation of Article 10 (Freedom of Expression) of the European Convention. The judgment ordered his immediate release. However, before the judgment of the ECtHR, drugs were allegedly discovered on Mr. Fatullayev in prison and thus he is currently being tried on drug-related charges. The bloggers Adnan Hajizade and Emin Abdullayev have been convicted for hooliganism.

On a positive note, the pardoning of editor Ganimat Zahidov and his release from prison, as well as the Government's renewed interest in decriminalizing defamation and libel were good developments, although the Office was long anticipating concrete progress in this last issue. Nevertheless, the Office is actively working with the Government and the Azerbaijan Press Council toward this goal and the improvement of media self-regulation.

In the **economic front**, the Government succeeded in achieving high economic growth rates, developing the energy sector, and generating high revenues from oil and gas exports. Azerbaijan has reduced the poverty rate from 49% in 2001 to 11% in 2009.

Azerbaijan has managed the global economic crisis relatively well. Macroeconomic stability remains a Government priority. The gross domestic product (GDP) grew at a robust 9.3% in 2009. Forecasts for 2010 predict between 2.7 % and 9% GDP growth. The State budget for 2010 was set by the Parliament at 12.37 billion AZN, approximately the same as in 2009. Inflation dropped sharply from 20.8% in 2008 to 1.5% in 2009 according to official data. On the other hand, job cuts have become more commonplace due in part to a sharp decline in non-oil GDP growth from 16% to 3% 2009, adversely affecting the manufacturing and construction sectors. Unemployment estimates differ widely, however. Whereas the rate of officially registered unemployed is only 0.9%, the unemployment rate is 6% if calculations are based on an ILO mechanism (State Statistical Committee estimates).

While the energy sector continues to function as the main driving force for economic growth, non-oil investment, especially foreign direct investment, remains relatively low. Therefore, additional measures are needed to improve the business and investment climate in order to diversify the economy and be better able to compete for scarcer sources of foreign investment. The *State Programme of Socio-Economic Development of Regions for 2009-2013* has been put into force for that purpose.

**In the light of the foregoing**, the Country continued to feature overall political and economic stability, despite some shortcomings in election administration, freedom of the media, rule of law and respect for human rights. While progress has been made particularly

on important ongoing legislative reforms, remaining problems should be addressed in view of the needs and traditions of the Country.

### **Notable trends in the Office's Performance in Each Dimension**

The Office is generally benefiting from excellent co-operation with government agents as well as with civil society in all three OSCE dimensions. The Office's working dialogue particularly with the Parliament has marked an increasing trend. The overall media coverage of the Office's activities and statements have become wider and more positive, reflecting the higher profile the Office has gained. The Model OSCE Conference organized for the first time in May this year set another good example of positive publicity. Additionally, the Office is currently producing six short public service announcements to be broadcast on the TV on the following topics: prevention of domestic violence; facts about human trafficking; voter education; protection of environment; policing as a public service; and right to an attorney.

In the **first dimension**, a notable example of the Office's success has been the Police Assistance Programme. In 2005, Community Policing started as a pilot project in one city. With the addition of two locations during the reporting period, the project has now reached eleven locations across Azerbaijan, including the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. It has been recognized by legislation, endorsed by the President of Azerbaijan, and decreed in May 2009 to be implemented nation-wide. In June this year, the Office convened the first ever International Community Policing Conference in Baku.

In the **second dimension**, Office's Economic and Environmental Programme has made significant progress in promoting good economic governance, raising environmental awareness and supporting new and existing entrepreneurs in the non-oil sectors to start and develop their businesses. During the reporting period, the Office has been particularly active in facilitating the energy policy dialogue among decision-makers regarding renewable energy sources. A special programme has been launched to raise awareness about environment and security linkages among civil society organizations.

In the **third dimension**, election related activities occupied a significantly large space in the work agenda of the Office which also continued its close co-operation with all stakeholders with a view to further strengthening the rule of law and the respect for human rights. Moreover, the Office successfully implemented its 2009 Trial Monitoring Programme thanks to the commendable co-operation by the authorities.

The Office continued closely working with civil society and facilitating the work of the NGOs in particular, by addressing certain registration and interference issues with the authorities, *inter alia*.

## **2. Politico-Military Dimension**

### **Police Assistance Programme**

Community Policing, which underlines the role of police as service providers within the community, has continued with success in the two initial cities of Mingechevir and Shirvan, as well as in nine other locations, emphasizing crime prevention and gender mainstreaming.

The Office deployed early this year one international police expert in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic to assist with the launching of community policing, in addition to the other new location, where the Programme was launched. During the reporting period, the Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs jointly organized a meeting of Police Chiefs from all sites to identify international best practices in Community Policing. The Office and local police administrations also co-organized Police Open Days at the project sites. A Mobile Training Team delivered, to neighbourhood police officers, a series of training sessions and presentations on the best practices of community policing, police-public relations, domestic violence, anti-drug measures and first-aid.

The Office also facilitated the development of Community Policing Guidelines that were presented during the First International Community Policing Conference which took place for the first time in Baku in June this year bringing together more than 100 participants including international experts.

In view of continuing familiarizing decision-making police officials with well established community policing practices, the Office organized a number of study visits to Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Office facilitated the participation of Government representatives in a Regional Workshop held in Minsk on Operationalizing the Guidebook on Democratic Policing.

In November last year, the Office initiated a school policing component in two sites that included training of police officers who will be directly working with schools.

Following the Action Plan on Mainstreaming Gender into the Community Policing Project developed jointly by the Office and the Gender Section of the OSCE Secretariat, the Office conducted discussions with the participation of senior police officials, civil society and state officials and recommended different ways to promote women's role in the police service.

### **Freedom of Assembly – Police Training- and Development**

The Office built on previous efforts in the field of Public Assembly Management with particular focus on the Baku city police. Two seminars were held in Baku by a team of German police trainers, involving theoretical discussions and exercises. The same training was conducted in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

Following a request by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, co-operation with the Police Training School in Baku has been discontinued.

### **Fight Against Terrorism and Organized Crime**

The Office has continued to support the goals of the Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) through engaging with key Azerbaijani government officials. In this context, the Office facilitated a study visit to the United Kingdom providing senior Azerbaijani officials with direct insight into British experience in developing measures against terrorism and organized crime that are simultaneously effective, human-rights based and avoid backlash. Further, the Office facilitated a training workshop for officials of the Ministry of National Security on assessing terrorism-related risks. In addition, the Office supported the

delegation of the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate during their visit to Baku in December 2009. Furthermore, the Office facilitated the participation of Azerbaijani Government officials in meetings of the International Bomb Data Centre working group in Zurich and Puerto Rico. Azerbaijan has now expressed willingness to become a full member of the International Bomb Data Centre Working Group.

### **Combating Corruption in the Police**

In support of the implementation of the Government's *National Strategy on Increasing Transparency and Combating Corruption 2007-2011*, the Office and the Hungarian National Police developed a three-week comprehensive programme for increasing the capacities of the Ministry of National Security in countering corruption. The Office further facilitated a study visit of the International Investigation Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Republic of Hungary.

### **Anti-Trafficking Activities**

Since 2009, the Office has been increasing its focus and resource allocation with respect to Anti-trafficking in Human Beings. In October 2009, based upon allegations about a mass human trafficking case, the Office immediately intervened and remained engaged with authorities. In June 2010, the Office joined a partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) on a comprehensive anti-trafficking response in the Southern Caucasus project funded by the European Commission.

The Office also conducted training for the Anti-Trafficking Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases. In co-operation with the ILO Office in Baku and the OSCE Mission to Serbia the Office organized a study visit to Serbia on the topic of "National Referral Mechanisms for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings". In addition, the Office attended and facilitated the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and a civil society group Clean World, at the 9<sup>th</sup> Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference in Vienna in June 2010.

## **3. Economic-Environmental Dimension**

### **Promoting good governance**

The Office contributed to the implementation of the *National Strategy on Increasing Transparency and Combating Corruption for 2007-2011*, by supporting the Anti-Corruption Centres (ALACs) of Transparency Azerbaijan in Guba and Shaki. The Centres conducted mobile-outreach workshops in remote regions, operated toll-free telephone hotlines, provided legal advice on corruption complaints filed by the public, undertook advocacy actions to address specific legal and institutional weaknesses, conducted information sessions for government officials on how to address corruption complaints and trained citizens on their rights with regard to corruption.

In June 2010, the Office established a new Legal Advice Centre for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), which provides legal counselling for entrepreneurs in Baku and Shaki. The Office's implementing partner, the NGO Education for Human Rights, will conduct several workshops on business ethics standards and the relevant legal and regulatory framework.

Subsequent to the Government's adoption in 2005 of *National Accounting Standards for Commercial Organizations* in order to introduce International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), the Office conducted a training series mainly targeting chief accountants in Baku, Shaki and Barda.

The Office contributed to the implementation of the recently adopted *Law to Counter Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism* by publishing the first comprehensive reference guidebook. In 2009, the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) lifted its compliance enhancing procedures for Azerbaijan following the adoption of the Law and the establishment of the Financial Monitoring Service. In 2010, the Office offered further assistance to the Financial Monitoring Service.

### **Economic diversification and development of the non-oil sector**

The Office contributed to the implementation of the *State Programme of Socio-Economic Development of Regions for 2009-2013*, by organizing regional training courses on entrepreneurship. The Office conducted a first train-the-trainers course within the ILO-certified Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) Programme, training eleven business instructors. Furthermore, two hundred potential and existing entrepreneurs in non-oil sectors received training and counselling on how to start or further develop their small and medium-sized enterprises. The training covered topics such as business registration, marketing, business planning and tax reporting.

The Office has continued to be an active participant in donor co-ordination meetings organized by the Ministry of Economic Development.

### **Environmental security**

The Office provided active support to Azerbaijan in implementing the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) and co-organized several activities during the reporting period. The Office facilitated an ongoing joint project with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) regarding a new bilateral water agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia and contributed to an assessment on improving oil spills capacities to protect the Caspian Sea environment. In late 2009, the Office launched the Civic Action for Security and Environment (CASE) Programme in Azerbaijan. The programme provides funding for civil society organizations (CSOs) to raise awareness on environment and security linkages with a focus on local environmental initiatives. CSOs have shown considerable interest in the programme and have started projects in the fields of waste management, climate change awareness and environmental monitoring.

Since 2009, the Office has been supporting the efforts of the Government in developing renewable energy sources, by facilitating a policy dialogue and raising awareness among policy makers. In December 2009, the Office conducted a five-day training course for

government agencies, the private sector and the Parliament regarding legal and regulatory frameworks for renewable energy. The Office led study tours to Spain and Germany in order to provide concrete examples of technologies and renewable energy policies.

The Office further organized a training course for journalists on climate change reporting.

#### **4. Human Dimension -Democratization Programme**

##### **Electoral Support**

Azerbaijan held municipal elections in December 2009, in advance of which, the Office launched a number of election support activities in order to promote a free and fair electoral process in line with OSCE commitments. The activities involved the trainings of various actors in the election process, including domestic observers, political party observers, and election commissions; raising public awareness about the importance of local governance, and providing leadership and candidacy training for women.

In this context, the Office organized, jointly with the Presidential Administration and the Central Election Commission, seminars or “information sessions” for all Heads of Regional Executive Authorities and Heads of District Election Commissions, devoted to the legal provisions on non-interference by executive authorities in the electoral process. The Office also organized a nationally-televised discussion programme on the importance of local governance with the participation of members of Parliament, Government, civil society and political parties. The Office further organized extensive observer training for both independent and political party observers prior to the municipal elections. In addition, the Office hosted regular coordination meetings for international organizations and diplomatic missions in order to more effectively plan election assistance programmes and avoid overlapping activities.

In early 2010, the Office began its activities to prepare for the 2010 parliamentary elections on 7 November. To this end, the Office launched voter education seminars in 24 regions of Azerbaijan, which are designed to stimulate more robust public participation in the parliamentary elections as voters, observers and candidates. In addition, the Office organized two high-level roundtables with the participation of all political parties represented in Parliament, Government representatives, civil society, international community and ODIHR. These were the first roundtables in over eight years that brought together the ruling and opposition parties, and raised central issues such as the composition of election commissions and the implementation of *the Freedom of Assembly Law*.

##### **Freedom of the Media**

The Office continued activities under the *2008 Unified Information and Communication Strategy* in order to promote better implementation of the *Law on Access to Information* (2005). These activities included training for journalists and spokespersons on information requests and provision, as well as international best practices in press relations and communication strategies.

In 2010 the Office also began a far-reaching collaboration with the Azerbaijan Press Council, including a needs assessment on the Council's *Code of Ethics* and its press complaints mechanism. The assessment recommendations form the foundation of a longer-term project for developing press self-regulation in Azerbaijan and pursuing the decriminalization of defamation.

In addition to freedom of media and freedom of information issues, the Office is also supporting media and journalism development throughout the Country. Specifically, the Office is undertaking training activities for regional television outlets on local news coverage as well as for youth in new media skills and online journalism. In addition, the Office is supporting the reform of the *National Standards on Teaching of Journalism Education*, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education.

### **Gender Equality**

The Office completed its support to the Resource Centre on Democracy and Gender in Shamakhi, which opened in July 2007. During the Centre's third phase completed in September 2009, it conducted leadership training and motivated local women to start initiative groups on issues of concern in their communities.

During the reporting period the Office intensified its activities and lobbying efforts in support of the adoption of a *Law on Domestic Violence*. The Office organized a high-level conference in November 2009 with the participation of Government representatives, Members of Parliament, civil society and media, at which it presented and discussed ODIHR's expert opinion on the draft *Law on Domestic Violence* before Parliament. The Office also organized four nationally-televised programs on the same issue and participated in parliamentary debate. The Law was adopted in June 2010 (currently pending for the President's signature), including some significant ODIHR recommendations.

### **Democratic Governance**

As part of its wider efforts to promote democratic governance within the Parliament, the Office commenced co-operation with the Parliament on improving its website. The Office brought international experts to develop the legislative database, and to make both pending and adopted legislation available to the public online.

## **5. Human Dimension -Rule of Law Programme**

### **Trial Monitoring**

Within the framework of the Office's endeavours to further strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights in the Country, the Office successfully completed its comprehensive 2009 Trial Monitoring Programme in December 2009. The programme provided for the trial observation of over 1,000 criminal and civil cases in courts of various instances throughout the Country. The Office discussed the findings and recommendations to be included in the 2009 Trial Monitoring Report with the relevant State authorities, prior to the Report's release. Further, the Office launched a new Trial Monitoring Programme in January 2010 to continue monitoring court proceedings at random for the purpose of

assessing compliance with applicable national legislation and fair trial standards. On a systematic basis, the Office will continue sharing the preliminary findings with the relevant State authorities to facilitate the preparation of recommendations for the 2010 Trial Monitoring Report with a focus on identifying the positive and negative trends in the justice sector.

The Office's ongoing fruitful discussions with the Ministry of Justice, Judiciary, the Prosecution and the Bar Association should further enhance the fair and efficient administration of justice in the Country. The findings and recommendations arising out of the Trial Monitoring Reports should also guide future training and capacity building activities for legal professionals, as well as the Office's support to future legal and judicial reforms. It should be noted that the Government has already effectively addressed some recommendations made by the Office in previous Trial Monitoring Reports through legal reforms and other measures, including the increase in the number of defence lawyers and judges, the refurbishment of court rooms and the establishment of a new training facility (Justice Academy).

### **Fostering the Rights of Detained Persons**

The Office continued providing technical assistance, including to the drafting of new legislation on the rights of suspects and accused, in close co-operation with the Parliament, relevant State authorities and civil society representatives.

Moreover, the Office continued monitoring prisons, remand detention facilities and police stations throughout the Country. The Office's report on findings in 2009 and its recommendations were discussed with the relevant authorities. The Office also followed up individual cases brought to its attention. The Office is continuing its monitoring activities in 2010 in close co-operation with the authorities and civil society involved in protecting the rights of detained persons.

In view of Azerbaijan's ratification of the *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT)* in January 2009, the Office supported the establishment of a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) in the Country, intended to provide a system of regular periodic inspections of facilities where persons are deprived of their liberty. Following the designation of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) as NPM, the Office supported the Ombudsman's efforts in this field. In particular, the Office organised two international workshops and a conference, in November 2009 and in May 2010, in co-operation with ODIHR, the Bristol University Human Right Department, the Ombudsman's Office and the Parliament, for NPM staff, State authorities and NGOs involved in detention monitoring.

### **Training Activities**

In close co-operation with all stakeholders, the Office continued supporting training and capacity building activities for legal professionals throughout the Country to increase compliance with fair trial standards and to further assist the strengthening of the justice sector. In particular, the Office closely co-operated with the Judicial Legal Council (JLC) and supported the JLC's official training programme for judges and prosecutors. The Office also organised comprehensive training sessions for newly recruited judge candidates at the

Justice Academy. In addition, the Office successfully implemented several moot court training sessions for judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers. Following these successful sessions, the JLC introduced a new training methodology into the training curricula for judge candidates.

The Office further agreed with the Azerbaijani Bar Association to support training of defence lawyers and to monitor the Bar examinations for new candidates.

The Office also supported training activities through its four Legal Resource Centres located in the regions in order to improve the professionalism and capacity of legal professionals. Following a needs assessment visit to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, the Office has developed in co-operation with the Nakhchivan authorities, training sessions for candidates to the Nakhchivan Bar Association.

### **Legal Resource Centres in the regions**

The Office continued operating Legal Resource Centres in the regions. In addition to those previously established in Sumgayit, Ganja and Lankaran, the Office supported the establishment of a new centre in Shaki. After fruitful consultations with all involved stakeholders, the Office is planning to open a Resource Centre also in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. These centres have proven to be valuable assets for the local population in the regions they serve, as demonstrated by the large number of diverse cases handled by the centres, including family and inheritance law, contractual issues, property rights and administrative matters.

### **Judicial and Legislative Reforms**

The Office supported the modernisation and the reform of the Azerbaijan justice sector in line with the *State Programmes on Development of Justice in Azerbaijan for 2009-2013* and on *Modernisation of the Work of the Prosecutor's Office for 2009-2011*. In particular, the Office was involved in further improving relevant legislation, such as the draft law on the rights of suspects and accused, and followed up on the adoption of the new Law on Normative Legal Acts. The new law clearly regulates the primacy of international law *vis a vis* domestic legislation, requires legal scrutiny by competent experts and necessitates the identification of duties and liabilities of the authorities involved in the implementation of legislation, *inter alia*. The Office further supported the reform of the juvenile justice system, notably through a pilot alternative to detention, and a legal clinic for juveniles, as well as by supporting the Parliament's development of new specialised legislation for juveniles. The Office also assisted with the implementation of the World Bank Modernisation of Justice Programme for 2006-2011 by the Ministry of Justice, particularly regarding the establishment of the Justice Academy and Legal Resource Centres in the regions. The Office finally welcomed the more open and democratic progress made by the judicial selection examinations during the reporting period, which demonstrated the authorities' commitment to create a transparent and fair judicial system.

### **Human Rights Advice**

The Office continued considering individual human rights issues and advising applicants, as to possible ways to restore their rights. The submitted cases related in particular to the

registration of NGOs, enforcement of judgments, alleged violations of property rights, domestic violence, procedural issues relating to fair trial guarantees, as well as to alleged administrative shortcomings. The Office addressed the issues at stake together with the relevant authorities in accordance with the applicable domestic legislation. Moreover, the Office, in co-operation with its implementing partner, prepared and published an information booklet for the population on how to file civil claims with the Azerbaijani courts.

### **Property Rights**

Following consultations conducted during the reporting period with all stakeholders including the authorities and civil society, the Office will support the improvement of current legislation and practice on real property rights.

## **6. Concluding Remarks**

The Office will continue to support the Government and civil society in their efforts to make progress in all three OSCE dimensions.

It should be noted that the Office could not have succeeded in its work without the valuable co-operation of the representatives of the Government of Azerbaijan and in particular of the Presidential Administration, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Justice, Ecology and Natural Resources and Economic Development as well as the Central Election Commission, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman), the State Committee for Family, Women and Children, and the Council of State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In addition, representatives of Azerbaijan's political organizations, civil society organizations and the media extended highly commendable co-operation to the Office. The Office further operated in close co-operation with international actors in order to improve the effectiveness of its operations and avoid overlaps. Finally, the Office's own local and international staff deserve the highest appreciation for their exemplary professionalism and dedication in their contribution to the performance of the Office.