



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1110th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
21 July 2016**

*in response to Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom,
the Rt Hon Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE*

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan welcomes Baroness Joyce Anelay, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom to the Permanent Council and thanks her for the comprehensive presentation.

Azerbaijan welcomes the increasing attention being paid by the international community to the issue of elimination of sexual violence in armed conflicts, which has contributed to developing a solid normative framework and to raising awareness on the impact that sexual violence has on victims, families and societies.

Civilians continue to pay the highest price in the wake of armed conflict, including discriminatory treatment, torture, sexual violence, extrajudicial executions, mass population displacement and ethnic cleansing. In many situations of armed conflict, sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war to terrorize and force displacement.

It is imperative that all parties to armed conflict strictly abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. Azerbaijan reiterates its strong condemnation of all acts of sexual violence in conflict. There can be no tolerance for such acts, and all the necessary measures must be taken to end impunity. Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, and national courts are the principal venues for holding individuals accountable for crimes of sexual violence.

Unfortunately, not all grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including acts of sexual violence, receive sufficient attention and response at the international and regional levels. More resolute and targeted measures are therefore required to bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice; such measures and appropriate protection efforts must obviously be free of selectivity and politically motivated approaches and preferences.

Azerbaijan attaches utmost importance to implementation of landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions in all their aspects, in particular those

related to ensuring the rule of law in armed conflict and post conflict situations, and comprehensively promoting justice and accountability in ways that further equal right of women and the right to participation in decision-making.

During its Presidency in the United Nations Security Council in October 2013, Azerbaijan convened an open debate on women, rule of law and transitional justice in conflict affected situations, which resulted in the adoption of Resolution 2122. This resolution is an important step to further strengthen international legal framework on combating gender-based violence and exploitation in the context of armed conflicts.

In light of the above-mentioned, we remain to be a strong proponent of full integration of provisions envisaged in relevant UN Security Council resolutions into OSCE' gender-related activities. It is within this context that we underline urgent need for adequate attention to prevention and combating gender-based violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, especially within vulnerable groups, such as refugees and IDPs.

The protection of women, as well as fight against impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern against women and girls in the context of armed conflicts should be regarded as an important aspect of any comprehensive strategy to resolve conflicts and thus, should be properly addressed within the OSCE. In this regard we note that OSCE 2004 Gender Action Plan a framework document for addressing gender related issues identified women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as prevention of violence against women as one of the priorities areas and we deem it of utmost importance to further advance these commitments. It is with this understanding we welcome the discussions on the Addendum to the OSCE Gender Action plan and stand ready to constructively engage in further discussions with a view to delivering a comprehensive document.

Mr. Chairperson,

Using the presence of Baroness Joyce Anelay with us today, the Delegation of Azerbaijan would like to express its grave concern at the sharp increase in cases of intolerance and discrimination, including on the basis of religion in UK.

Tolerance and non-discrimination are important elements in enhancing security and stability through promoting dialogue, mutual respect and culture of co-existence. Thus current negative trend in rising of intolerance and discrimination are serious threat to our common vision of an OSCE area free of dividing lines and conflicts.

The National Police Chief's Council reported a 57 per cent increase in reporting to True Vision, a police-funded hate-crime-reporting website, between 24 and 27 June, compared to the same time in May 2016. While hate speech and attacks on minorities living in UK have risen tangibly in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, surge in anti-Muslim hatred fuelled by terrorist incidents was happening well before the EU referendum.

Organization Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks (Tell MAMA) documented incidents of Islamophobia across the UK by collecting data independently and in collaboration with 15 police forces recorded a 326 per cent increase in Anti-Muslim incident in 2015. This includes verbal and physical attacks in school, colleges and other educational institutions, in public places and public transport. The racist and xenophobic incidents, including abusive language, harassment or threats against Muslims or Mosques are widely observed online.

The organization estimates that the numbers are likely to be underestimated as many people are too frightened to report incidents. Relevant non-governmental organizations claim that Muslims in UK now live in a “new environment of hate”.

The situation is even more alarming with regard to Muslim women and girls who are particularly vulnerable to attacks due to Islamic clothing that they wear. Becoming a target for general abuse and threats Muslim women are now being prevented from conducting day to day activities.

Public discourse by high politicians and representatives of the media instead of promoting understanding, only fuels current negative trend. Recent remark by the Sun columnist Kelvin MacKenzie who criticized Channel 4 News for using a journalist wearing a hijab to present a reporting on the Nice attack is quite illustrative to this end.

ODIHR Director Michael Georg Link and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein have already expressed their concern at reports on hate incidents in UK. They urged the British authorities to stop rising xenophobic attacks and take swift measures in identification and persecution of the perpetrators.

All participating States committed to promoting tolerance and non-discrimination and therefore we reiterate the need to strongly condemn Islamophobic attacks by combating manifestations of intolerance against Muslims in line with the relevant OSCE commitments and to take effective measures to prevent their re-occurrence.

The current situation necessitates resolute and coordinated action by the international community and we call on the Government of UK to take urgent steps to improve the situation, promptly investigate such incidents and bring responsible to justice

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.