



Hügelgasse 2, A-1130, Wien | Tel.: + 43 (1) 403 13 22 | Fax: + 43 (1) 403 13 23 | E-mail: vienna@mission.mfa.gov.az

**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1159th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
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in response to the Delegations of the United States of America and Canada

Mr. Chairperson,

In response to an attempt by the Delegations of the United States of America and Canada to introduce a new dimension of OSCE commitments, I would like to emphasize that in OSCE we have never agreed to those definitions used by US and Canadian colleagues, neither with regard to sexual minorities. Thus, we do not see the raised issue as a subject for OSCE agenda.

I wish to remind the distinguished colleagues that in Azerbaijan everyone, including representatives of sexual minorities is equal before the law. Moreover, Azerbaijani society historically and traditionally is well-known for its long-standing traditions of tolerance and values of peaceful co-existence.

We could have shared information on the alleged actions of mistreatment of sexual minorities in Azerbaijan on bilateral basis with the concerned Delegations to OSCE. Regretfully, these Delegations, in particular the Delegation of the United States followed its pattern of politicizing the issues, raised during the PC. If the Delegations further are interested in this issue, we recommend clarifying it through their bilateral Embassies in Baku or accredited to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

We would welcome the same enthusiasm by the US and Canadian Delegations to other human rights issues, such as the rights of Azerbaijani civilians illegally captured in the occupied territories or the rights of refugees and IDPs and their property rights, which are violated including through companies registered in the United States and Canada. This would demonstrate sincere attitude of these Delegations to issues of human dignity and security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.