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Recently proposed amendments to NGO legislation in Azerbaijan raise serious concerns

European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) member organizations are seriously concerned about the amendments recently proposed to the legislation regarding NGOs in Azerbaijan, amendments that would have a serious negative impact on the activity of both domestic and international non-governmental organizations that work in the country.

The proposed amendments would introduce further restrictions to the freedom of association in Azerbaijan, requiring all groups that mobilize for a cause to seek official registration. Groups of citizens that are formed ad-hoc in order to react to uncommon and urgent situations would be prevented to speak in public (under the penalty of a fee) before approval of their registration, thus rendering useless any notion of citizen's implication in the life of the state and of the community.

Other proposals would severely limit the funding options of an NGO, in a country where resources available to the non-governmental sector are limited.

ENEMO believes that the proposed amendments would create significant obstacles to the activities of NGOs in Azerbaijan. Organizations such as ENEMO, focused on independent monitoring of elections, would find it almost impossible to conduct activities under the proposed amendments.

ENEMO urges the Azerbaijani lawmakers to take into account the standards outlined by the Council of Europe guidelines on democracy and human rights and to pass legislation that encourages NGO activity instead of hindering it.

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Secretary General
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ENEMO Member Organizations: *Centers for Civic Initiatives -Bosnia and Herzegovina, Center for Democratic Transition – Montenegro, Center for Free Elections and Democracy – Serbia, Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society – Kyrgyzstan, Committee of Ukrainian Voters -Ukraine; Election Monitoring Center – Azerbaijan, GONG – Croatia, ISFED – Georgia, It's your choice – Armenia, LADOM – Moldova, MOST – Macedonia, Pro Democracy Association – Romania, Republican Network of Independent Monitors – Kazakhstan, Voice – Russia, , Obcianske Oko – Slovakia, Partnership - Belarus, Society for Democratic Culture – Albania, The Monitoring Center – Montenegro, Viasna – Belarus.*