Thank you, Madam Chairperson,

One year ago, the Azerbaijan Human Rights House was asked to seize all activities until an agreement with the authorities was adopted. Despite regular communication with the Azerbaijani authorities, the Azerbaijan Human Rights House remains closed.

The Azerbaijan Human Rights House was registered as an international branch of the Human Rights House Foundation in 2007. Consequently, the registration was in compliance with the Azerbaijani legislation at the time of the registration.

We urge the Republic of Azerbaijan to fully respect the right to freedom of association and hence immediately and unconditionally reopen the Azerbaijan Human Rights House.

Also, as we show in our written statement submitted to the Human Rights Council:

- Azerbaijan has put a de facto ban on peaceful assemblies since early 2006. 15 activists involved in the Spring 2011 mobilizations remain imprisoned. They should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Pressure is put on independent lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders, and their national organisations;
- Only since January 2012 the Institute for Reporters’ Freedom and Safety and the Democracy and NGO’s Development Resource Center in Nakhchivan are threatened by the authorities to be closed, with the accusation that their reporting on Internet is biased and false;

1 See: http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/17735.html.
• The preparation of Eurovision May 2012 in Baku has led to serious escalation of violation of property rights. Illegal evictions and expropriations must be stopped immediately;

• The oppression of those who raise their voices on social media remains worrying, as we highlighted at the panel discussion on freedom of expression on Internet.2

Madam Chairperson,

We call upon the Russian Federation to ensure that all acts of harassment, attacks and murders of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists, especially in the North Caucasus, are investigated and that those responsible are brought to justice.

The lawyer Sergei Magnitsky was tortured and died in custody in 2009. Those responsible for his death need to be promptly brought to justice promptly. The Human Rights House Foundation calls upon the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally drop all charges against Sergei Magnitsky. Sergei Magnitsky’s family has to be ensured of their security and of receiving compensation for his death. This case clearly shows the lack of rule of law in the Russian Federation.

Madam Chairperson,

The Human Rights House Foundation is worried about the on-going human rights violations and the escalation of repression against civil society in the Republic of Belarus, as you can read in our written statement submitted to the Human Rights Council. Ales Bialiatski, Head of the Human Rights Centre “Viasna” and Vice-president of the International Federation for Human Rights, remains imprisoned due to his legitimate work as a human rights defender.3 Since this weekend, the deputy of “Viasna”, Valentin Stefanovich, who came to the Human Rights Council session in September 2011, is no longer allowed to exit the country.

We call upon the Human Rights Council to take concrete measures to closely monitor the situation in Belarus at its 20th session, and hope that the Belarusian authorities will cooperate fully with the United Nations mechanisms.

Thank you.

2 See: http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/17693.html.

3 See: http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/17537.html.