

**The Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the  
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
REPORT  
on the activity in 2016**

**Baku 2016**

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## **Introduction**

The Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan continued its activity towards the development of NGOs in the country in accordance with its regulation and Concept on state support to NGOs. As in the previous years, different initiatives of public interest NGOs were supported and numerous projects were carried out aimed at developing civil society in the country in 2016.

During the last year, the Council has implemented three grant competitions. The topics of the competitions were discussed broadly in the meetings with the participation of the country's NGOs, opinions and proposals have been taken into consideration, giving priority to the issues in the Concept of state support to NGOs. So, grant competitions announced by the Council have covered all the issues, which are of public relevance in the life of modern country. NGO projects submitted for the competition have been considered sensitively. Majority of the topics submitted regarding human rights and democracy; institutional issues related to transparency, awareness raising on different topics that are of public importance, international cooperation, environment and health issues, social issues and in other directions have been financed by the Council as a priority. Besides these topics, strengthening cooperation between NGOs and other public institutions, making the issues public related to the different fields of culture, holding events commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Khojali genocide, organizing promoting events in participant countries on IV Islam Solidarity Games, which will be held in Azerbaijan in 2017, promoting tourism potential of Azerbaijan in mass media, issues regarding the promotion of "Open Government" and some issues that need new approach have been suggested as a topic to NGOs.

In order to increase the effectiveness of projects carried out by foreign NGOs with the financial support of the Council, numerous events have been organized both in the country and abroad, and participation of the members of the Council and the employees of the Secretariat in these events have been provided.

### **Activities carried out regarding main directions of state support to NGOs**

- **Informational support**

The publication of "Civil society" monthly magazine in new edition have been successfully continued in order to inform the public about the activities of the Council, as well as the NGOs, to enlighten the dynamics of the development of non-governmental organizations, the execution and results of the projects. "Civil society journal" have been published 12 times in 2016. The publication of information, article, interview, materials, that are methodical recommendation, on the execution of the projects in all fields of NGO activities in the country, results and accountancy, as well as NGO legislation, exchange of international practice and on other topics have continued.

More than 50 articles and interviews on the topic of activities of NGOs, including the measures taken by the Council, information containing separate updates in each issue of the magazine were published. Although information on the projects financed by the Council in the selection of the journalist prevails, no discrimination was made regarding the NGO projects financed by other donors. The NGO projects financed by Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Youth Foundation and other donor have always given consideration and information and articles on the execution of those projects were given with photos.

The editorial office of the magazine has provided the spread of information operatively about the projects implemented abroad with the support of the Council. The magazine always allocated place for the opinions of experts, state officials and MPs on their page related to current issues in the state agenda, put efforts on protecting the principles of freedom of expression and pluralism in press.

[www.qhtxeber.az](http://www.qhtxeber.az) website of the Council, which is daily updated, operated continuously during the year to provide online informational support to NGOs. Practical and theoretical issues about public sector of the country have been given in the website. All kinds of news, announcements and reports, reflecting the activities of NGOs, are placed in the website in new design; materials about NGO legislation, donor's activity, coalition and international cooperation of NGOs are presented for public discussions. Monthly views of the website have approximately been 62000 during a year. Maximum views have comprised about 50 thousand and 20 thousand in September-December and August, respectively. Daily views change on the number of IP (approximately 440-550). "The most read" comprises of statements, interviews, foreign visits of the Chairman of the Council, events held by the Council to increase the effectiveness in the activity of the Council, announced financial competitions. The policy of sharing information is conducted via social networking sites. [www.qhtxeber.az](http://www.qhtxeber.az) website has its own page and there are more than 3000 followers on this page and members up to 5000 in "QHT xeber Qrupu". Information on NGOs in well-known media outlets is broadcasted referring to [www.qhtxeber.az](http://www.qhtxeber.az). Moreover, [www.cssn.gov.az](http://www.cssn.gov.az) website of the Council operates both in Azerbaijani and English in order to get detailed information about the Council and its activities. 67 press-releases have been issued to the press about the activities of the Council and its events.

- **Consultative support**

The Council Secretariat held trainings and informational sessions on the topics of project management and submitting reports for the heads of the projects and accountants in order increase the effectiveness of implementation of financed projects within grant competitions in 2016.

Trainings have been organized regarding the rules of using new e-program, created by the Council with the purpose of receiving reports in March 2016. Within the trainings the NGOs were taught to submit annual financial statements to the Ministry of Finance. Trainings were held in Resource and Training Centers of Regional NGOs in Shirvan, Guba, Mingchevir, Shamkir and Gabala. The rules of getting password, compiling and sending reports were explained to the NGOs in the trainings, where more than 200 NGOs took part.

Informative sessions were held for the heads of NGOs that are winners of grant competition of the Council in April and July in 2016. In the meetings executive director of the Council's Secretariat said that informative sessions had been regularly organized in order to provide effective implementation of the projects. Executive director mentioned about provisions and obligations of grant agreements that will be signed between the Secretariat and NGOs, issues related to the implementation plans of the projects, the ways of increasing efficiency of implemented projects, selection of audience of events, which will be organized in future, on professional basis, preparation of financial and descriptive reports, evaluation of results and other issues. The importance of NGOs to obey the liabilities of the agreements and regulations of the Council was stated in the meeting. Chief accountant of the Secretariat of the Council informed the participants of the session about management of budget on projects and financial statements. At the end of the event the employees of the Secretariat answered the questions of the representatives of NGOs.

On December 16, 2016, the Council held the next informative session on the first grant competition of 2017. Executive director of the Secretariat of the Council gave detailed information about the topics, rules, conditions of the competition, application form and electronic software on receiving projects. He answered the questions of NGOs related to competition in the informative session.

- **Organizational and technical support**

The main duties of the Council include the establishing the activities of NGOs in accordance with legislation and international standards, increasing the managing ability of NGO representatives, conducting clerical work and accounting in accordance with the requirements of the law in NGOs and increasing knowledge and skills of NGOs in this field. For this purpose several important events have been held within a year.

Training on “Efficient management for NGO network” was organized in Guba on January 8, 2016. Representatives of 25 NGOs operating in Guba, Shabran, Khachmaz and Siyazan participated in the training. Employees of the Secretariat of the Council provided detailed information for the participants of the training about preparation and management of suggestions regarding the projects. Training on the same topic was held in Shirvan. Informative session on writing project proposals, its management, additions and amendments to the electronic submission of reports, as well as preparation of annual financial reports of NGOs was organized in Shirvan. Heads and accountants of NGOs operating in Shirvan, Hajigabul, Sabirabad and Saatli participated in the session. Broad discussions were organized on the topics of electronic accountancy, issues faced by NGOs in the process of project preparation and other issues, questions of civil society representatives were answered in the events.

On January 25, 2016 the Secretariat of the Council organized training on preparation of project proposals, monitoring and methods of assessments, management of budget expenditure, determination of public problems and new approaches to their solution in Gabala. Heads and accountants of 25 NGOs operating in Gabala, Goychay, Shaki and Oghuz took part in the meeting. The employees of the Secretariat of the Council informed the participants in detail about preparation of project proposals, monitoring and methods of evaluation, determination of public problems and new approaches to their solution, efficient management for NGO network. Furthermore, the Council provided detailed information regarding compiling cost estimates, amendments to Tax Code made in 2016, reports that will be submitted to SSPF and the Ministry of Finance and electronic software program of “e-qht”. The employees of the Secretariat answered the questions about the problems that NGOs faced during the project preparation and submission of reports.

On June, 2016, organizational support to holding the conference, where “STOP Metsamor” International NGO Coalition will be established and NGOs, representing 10 countries are members of this institution.

The Council created a new service for receiving applications, suggestions and complaints of NGOs in order to increase effectiveness, transparency, accountancy and openness in its activities in accordance with the 4.1.2 and 4.2.3 clauses of National Activity Plan on Promotion of Open Government.

Appeal Commission has been operating since the establishment of the Council to investigate applications of NGOs that are dissatisfied with the results of grant competitions. At the same time their opinions are heard in the meeting held with NGOs, relevant measures are taken on the applications of NGOs. The Council has created new service for NGOs to send their proposals and complaints directly aimed at evaluating the quality of the service of employees of the Secretariat and providing active participation of NGOs in public control.

On December 19 2016 the Council held two-day training for NGOs in Guba on the topic of "Establishing relations with public". Head of Press service of the Council Elmaddin Behbud noted that the Council served to NGOs in various fields, including informative, organizational and technical support in accordance with its Regulation. E.Behbud stated that relations of NGOs with public played an important role in increasing the efficiency of implemented projects. Head of Press service shared his opinions on mechanisms of improving NGO-mass media cooperation. The trainer of the event, where 20 organizations joined, was PR Manager, Editor-in-Chief of [www.qhtxeber.az](http://www.qhtxeber.az) website Sanan Najafov. Presentations were made within the training regarding determination of PR strategy, establishment of relations with social networking websites and press agencies, holding briefing and press conference, preparation of press-release, conducting SWOT analysis for evaluating the activity of the organization and on other topics and team works were implemented. The training continued with practical exercises.

On December 28, 2016 a meeting was held with specialized NGOs on family and children affairs in the Council. Nargiz Eyvazova, head of Integration of Azerbaijani Youth to Europe Organization, selected as a member of the Council from the group of "Family, women and children affairs", Secretary of the Council, stated that the meeting aimed at discussing the results of the projects, carried out with the support of the Council, and hearing the problems of NGOs and opinions and suggestions for their solution. Executive director of the Secretariat of the Council Farasat Gurbanov said that the Council financed 22 projects on family, women and children affairs in 2016. Executive director stated that the submission of reports of NGOs is about finishing and the Secretariat will prepare a relevant reference after analyzing these documents. Furthermore, he noted that specialization of NGOs in the fields of their interest and potential will lead to an increase in the quality of projects. Heads of NGOs said that the employees of the Secretariat of the Council helped them during the implementation of the projects. Representatives of NGOs made their proposals, as well. At the end of the meeting member of the Council Nargiz Eyvazova answered the questions of heads of NGOs.

- **Methodical support**

Methodical material was prepared as a booklet on "Rules of management of projects by the Secretariat financed by the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan". The purpose in preparing rules is to strengthen organizational and legal basis of management related to increasing public efficiency of projects, carried out by NGOs, getting more effective results, as well as providing transparency of activities.

[www.e-qht.az](http://www.e-qht.az) website of the Council has been prepared and presented to users after improving. Sections, such as e-application, expertise, appeal, e-report, agreeing projects with the Council, and e-newsletters are considered in this website. Software of e-application section has been presented to the users after improving, sections of appeal and agreeing projects with the Council and e-newsletter will be launched soon. At the same time section on legal and methodical recommendations and documents about organizing competitions and project management has been established.

- **Financial support**

The Council held 3 grant competitions for NGOs in 2016. The first grant competition ended on April 5. The competition lasted from December 14, 2015 to January 15, 2016 and covered more than 50 topics on 10 fields. 660 projects were submitted by NGOs for the competition, 110 out of these projects failed to pass technical selection process since the documents did not meet the requirements. Projects of 550 NGOs were presented to expertise and each project was evaluated by 3 different experts. The Council decided on financing 277 projects, considering the comments of experts and references prepared on each project by the Secretariat.

On June 8, 2016 the Council approved the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grant competition. The 2<sup>nd</sup> grant competition of the Council was announced on April 5, 2016. 295 project proposals were made by NGOs for the competition that covers 14 topics. 21 out of them failed to pass the selection process because the legal duration of authorized representative of the organization finished, and required documents for project proposals were not included and other such kind of deficiencies. 274 projects were submitted for expertise by the Council. 3 various experts assessed each project. The Council decided on financing 123 projects, considering the comments of experts and references prepared on each project by the Secretariat.

The Council finalized the 3<sup>rd</sup> financial competition on September 16, 2016. This grant competition continued between June 10 and July 8 and covered 8 topics. 233 projects proposals were submitted and 25 out of them failed to pass the initial selection process due to the lack of documents. 208 projects were approved for expertise. 83 projects succeeded in gathering the passing score. Members of the Council decided on financing 83 projects, taking into consideration the opinions of experts and Budget Commission.

Information on competitions held with financial support of the Council is placed on websites, such as [www.cssn.gov.az](http://www.cssn.gov.az), [www.qhtxeber.az](http://www.qhtxeber.az) and [www.e-qht.az](http://www.e-qht.az).

**Statistical information on financed projects of the 1<sup>st</sup> competition:**

| NOR | Name of the competition direction      | Number of submitted projects | Needed amount | Number of financed projects | Funds allocated by the Council |
|-----|--|------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1   | Human rights and democracy             | 20                           | 281 536,5     | 8                           | 77 000,0                       |
| 2   | Transparency and institutional affairs | 15                           | 211 834,0     | 12                          | 120 000,0                      |

|    |  |     |             |     |             |
|----|--|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|
| 3  | Awareness raising on various issues of public importance | 133 | 1 830 232,8 | 78  | 760 000,0   |
| 4  | Fight against drug use and human trafficking             | 34  | 474 784,5   | 18  | 174 000,0   |
| 5  | International cooperation                                | 38  | 556 619,9   | 17  | 187 000,0   |
| 6  | Environment and health issues                            | 68  | 914 536,9   | 28  | 245 000,0   |
| 7  | Family, women and children affairs                       | 60  | 833 673,6   | 22  | 207 000,0   |
| 8  | Social issues  | 56  | 742 943,4   | 29  | 267 400,0   |
| 9  | Economic issues  | 58  | 812 743,0   | 17  | 148 000,0   |
| 10 | Education, culture and sport affairs                     | 68  | 955 040,4   | 48  | 456 000,0   |
|    |  | 110 | 1 400 668,0 | 277 | 2 641 400,0 |

**Statistical information on financed projects of the 2<sup>nd</sup> competition:**

|   |   |    |             |    |           |
|---|---|----|-------------|----|-----------|
| 1 | Organization of events and campaigns on the 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of state independence of the Azerbaijan Republic | 19 | 244 857,3   | 9  | 92 000,0  |
| 2 | Organization of events and campaigns on the 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Khojali genocide                              | 12 | 173 386,2   | 5  | 60 000,0  |
| 3 | Holding campaigns of public importance  | 59 | 799 044,6   | 30 | 305 000,0 |
| 4 | Organization of events on patriotism  | 88 | 1 184 626,8 | 45 | 449 000,0 |
| 5 | Protection of rights of refugees and IDPs in international arena  | 5  | 69 688,0    | 4  | 39 000,0  |
| 6 | Initiatives on improving international cooperation of local NGOs  | 5  | 66 731,0    | 2  | 22 000,0  |
| 7 | Initiatives of protection of Azerbaijan's interests in international media  | 10 | 110 044,0   | 7  | 74 000,0  |
| 8 | Initiatives on involving foreign investments to Azerbaijan  | 3  | 44 119,0    | 1  | 10 000,0  |
| 9 | Organization of promotional events in   | 3  | 43 728,0    | 1  | 10 000,0  |

|    |  |            |                    |            |                    |
|----|--|------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|
|    | participating states regarding the IV Islam Solidarity Games that will be held in Azerbaijan in 2017           |            |                    |            |                    |
| 10 | Promotion of Azerbaijan tourism potential via foreign mass media   | 5          | 64 301,0           | 1          | 7 000,0            |
| 11 | Organization of sport competitions on various kinds among NGOs   | 2          | 29 926,4           | 0          | -                  |
| 12 | Initiatives on increasing competitive advantage of local production in agricultural sphere                     | 26         | 349 356,0          | 5          | 43 000,0           |
| 13 | Initiatives on broadening voluntary activity in the field of social service                                    | 26         | 353 084,0          | 5          | 53 000,0           |
| 14 | Initiatives regarding increasing transparency in the promotion of Open government and in Extractive Industries | 11         | 147 399,0          | 8          | 79 000,0           |
|    | Failed to pass selection process   | 21         |                    |            |                    |
|    |  | <b>295</b> | <b>3 680 291,4</b> | <b>123</b> | <b>1 243 000,0</b> |

**Statistical information on financed projects of the 3<sup>rd</sup> competition:**

|   |   |            |                    |           |                  |
|---|---|------------|--------------------|-----------|------------------|
| 1 | Initiatives on promotion of national idea   | 47         | 568 535,7          | 24        | 189 000,0        |
| 2 | Initiatives arising from "National Action Plan for promotion of Open government for the years of 2016-2018" | 11         | 143 004,2          | 7         | 56 000,0         |
| 3 | Initiatives on awareness raising and protection of the rights of consumers                                  | 18         | 214 265,9          | 6         | 48 000,0         |
| 4 | Initiatives on social and economic development  | 66         | 909 233,9          | 15        | 127 000,0        |
| 5 | Initiatives on regional security  | 8          | 115 222,0          | 3         | 20 000,0         |
| 6 | Initiatives against genocide, terrorism and religious radicalism  | 33         | 433 039,9          | 18        | 139 000,0        |
| 7 | Initiative on improving legal culture   | 13         | 165 438,0          | 6         | 46 000,0         |
| 8 | Initiatives on promotion of support of business institutions to NGO projects                                | 12         | 163 708,8          | 4         | 32 000,0         |
|   | Failed to pass the selection process  | 25         | 240 058,0          |           |                  |
|   |   | <b>233</b> | <b>2 952 506,5</b> | <b>83</b> | <b>657 000,0</b> |

So, the Council allocated funds amounted to AZN 4 541 000 for 483 projects on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grant competition in 2016. 6 of these organizations noted that they were unable to continue the projects due to some reasons. The Council cancelled its decision on 6 NGO projects, which amounted to AZN 57 000 considering these applications.

Final results on grants allocated by the Council in 2016 are the following:

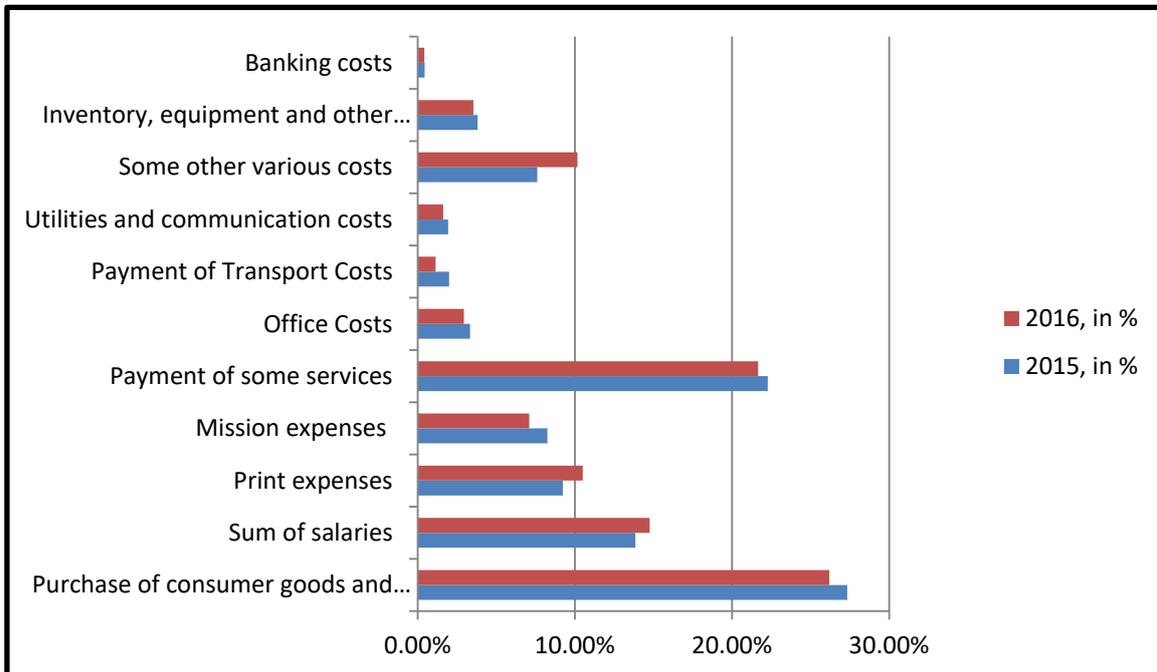
| <b>NOR</b> | <b>Direction of the allocated funds</b>                           | <b>Number of the projects</b> | <b>Amount</b> |
|------------|---|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 1          | On 3 grant competitions   | 477                           | 4 455 050,0   |
| 2          | On Appeals  | 16                            | 147 006,0     |
| 3          | Projects financed beyond the competition (including visit grants) | 58                            | 494 751,0     |
| 4          | On the projects of foreign NGOs                                   | 5                             | 272 728,0     |
|            | <b>Total</b>  | 556                           | 5 369 535,0   |

Appeal Commission has been established for investigating the applications of NGOs that are dissatisfied with the results of the grant competition. 3 meetings of Appeal Commission have been held on the projects within a year. Meetings of the Appeal Commission were held on April 26, June 28 and October 14 in 2016. In the meetings headed by the member of the Council, head of Citizens' Labor Rights Protection League Sahib Mammadov applications of 67 NGOs, dissatisfied with results of grant competition of 2016, were reviewed. Each project was looked through again and heads of NGOs were explained the deficiencies and mistakes made in their preparation in the discussions. After the discussions it was recommended to the Council to review the project proposals of 16 NGOs, considering the opinions of the experts after the discussions. Decision of the Council on 51 NGO projects was considered reasonable.

#### **Comparative analysis of expenses of NGOs**

| <b>NOR</b> | <b>Items of expenses</b>                              | <b>2015</b> |               | <b>2016</b> |               |
|------------|---|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
|            |   | <b>In %</b> | <b>Amount</b> | <b>In %</b> | <b>Amount</b> |
| 1          | Purchase of consumer goods and organization of events | 27,33       | 1 239 710,4   | 26,19       | 1 160 595,0   |
| 2          | Sum of salaries                                       | 13,85       | 628 206,8     | 14,76       | 653 937,4     |
| 3          | Print expenses  | 9,23        | 418 746,0     | 10,50       | 465 423,0     |
| 4          | Mission expenses                                      | 8,25        | 374 084,4     | 7,09        | 314 099,5     |
| 5          | Payment of some services                              | 22,27       | 1 010 216,2   | 21,66       | 959 651,7     |
| 6          | Office costs  | 3,32        | 150 476,2     | 2,93        | 129 752,9     |
| 7          | Payment of transport costs                            | 1,99        | 90 106,4      | 1,13        | 50 243,5      |
| 8          | Utilities and communication costs                     | 1,93        | 87 448,2      | 1,61        | 71 493,1      |
| 9          | Some other various costs                              | 7,60        | 344 729,9     | 10,16       | 450 300,8     |

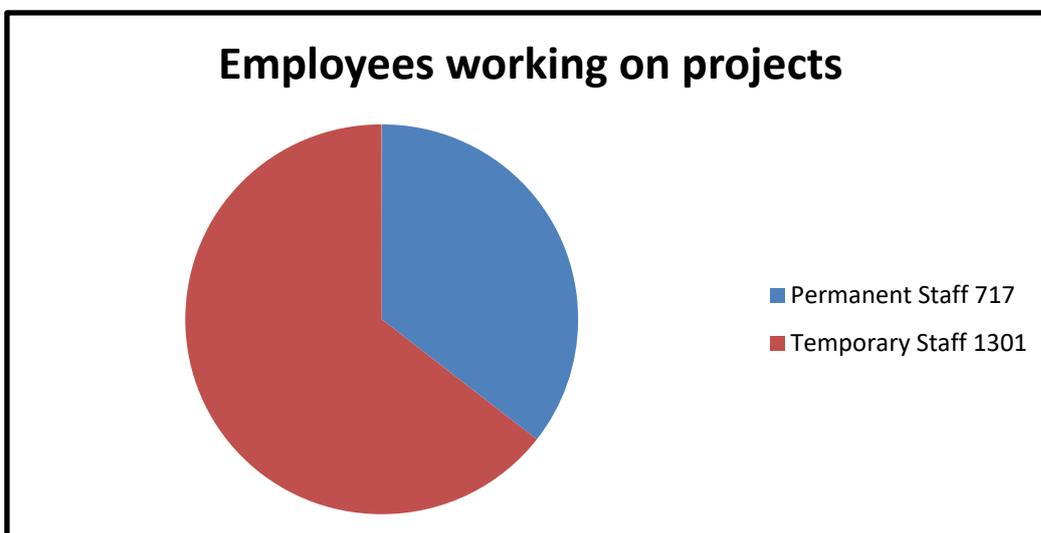
|    |  |            |                    |               |                    |
|----|--|------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 10 | Inventory, equipment and other purchases | 3,80       | 172 212,7          | 3,54          | 156 728,8          |
| 11 | Banking costs                            | 0,44       | 19 909,6           | 0,42          | 18 801,6           |
|    | <b>Total</b>                             | <b>100</b> | <b>4 535 846,8</b> | <b>100,00</b> | <b>4 431 027,3</b> |



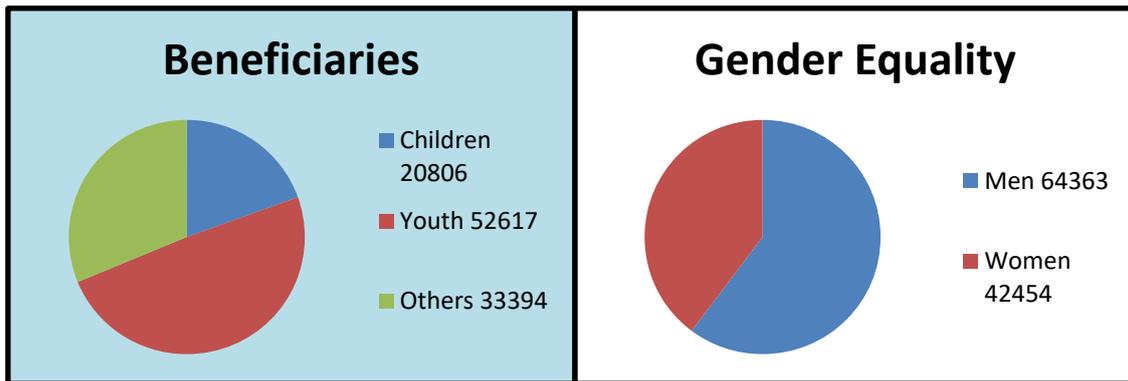
### Statistical indicators on implemented projects

Reports of the NGOs on projects financed by the Council and already implemented in 2016 were submitted. Reports were investigated by the employees of the Secretariat of the Council and the following results and statistical indicators were noted:

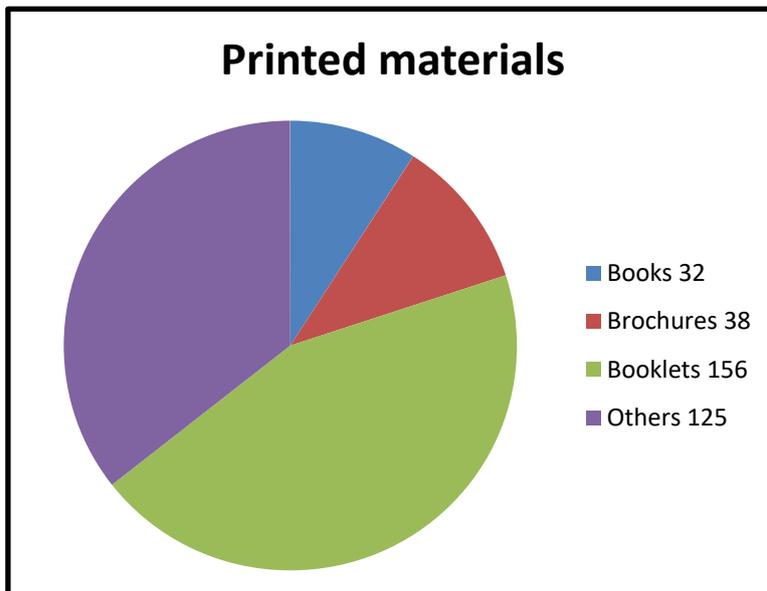
- 2018 people were involved in the implementation of the projects financed in 2016. 717 and 1301 people out of them were permanent and temporary employees, respectively.



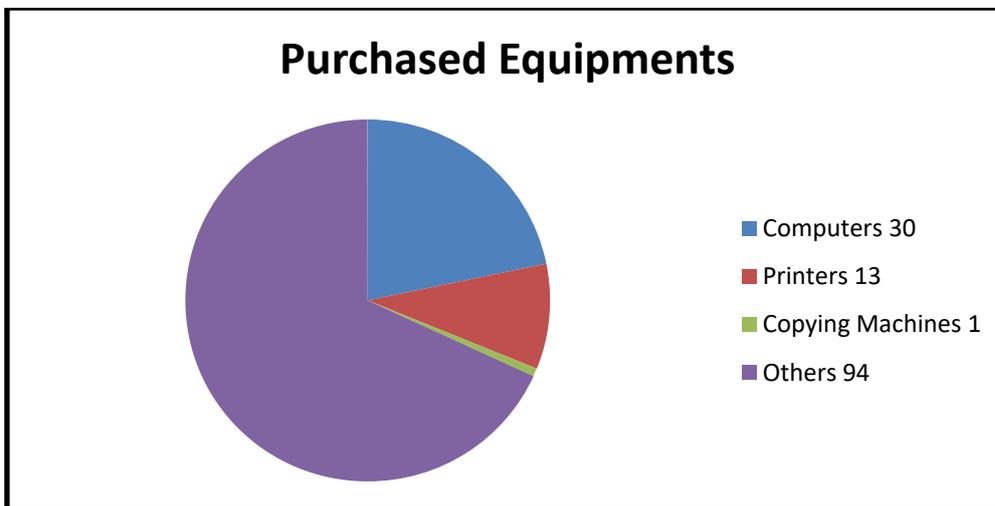
- 106817 people were involved in the events held within the projects. 42454 and 64363 out of them were females and males, relevantly.



- 289 trainings were held and 11299 people took part in these trainings.
- 1689 different events were organized and 80393 people participated in these events.
- 32 books, 38 brochures, 156 booklets and 125 different materials (posters, calendars and etc.) were prepared.



- 45 TV programs, 31 social videos, 25 films, 31 websites 12 other events were organized.
- 30 computers, 13 printers, 1 copier machine and 94 other equipments were bought.



### Current activity

- **Meetings of the Council**

The Council regularly held its meetings according to Clause 4.7 of Regulation on the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 34 meetings of the Council took place during a year. Efficient organization of activities of the Council, holding financial support competitions and its results, and other issues, arose from the Concept of state support to non-governmental organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan were discussed and relevant decisions were made.

On April 22, 2016 the first meeting of the Council with new composition was held. Organizational affairs were reviewed in the meeting. Azay Guliyev was elected the chairman of the Council for the next term. Vusal Guliyev and Nargiz Eyvazova were elected Deputy Chairman and secretary, respectively. Azay Guliyev thanked President Ilham Aliyev for his confidence on behalf of the members of the Council.

- **Supervision over the implementation of projects and monitoring**

Elections for determining the candidates for membership of the Council in 8 specialized NGO groups were held according to clause 3.6 and subparagraph 4.8.7-1 of "Regulation on State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan", approved with the decree NO 674 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated on December 13, 2007. The Council's Secretariat provided all necessary conditions for holding free, transparent and democratic elections. The Council's Secretariat made an announcement for holding elections on January 15, 2016 and submission of applications continued until February 26. 683 representatives and 43 candidates were registered for taking part in the elections and for the membership to the Council, respectively.

- **Establishment of Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform**

On September 2016 the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan held a constituent meeting of Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform on Promotion of "Open Government" with the participation of NGO representatives in accordance with National Action Plan for the years between 2016 and 2018 on Promotion of "Open Government".

Chairman of the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Azay Guliyev stated in the meeting, where representatives of government, civil society institutions and international organizations participated, that the establishment of Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform on Promotion of "Open Government" is of great importance for the society.

It was noted that the 4<sup>th</sup> article in National Action Plan for the years between 2016 and 2018 on Promotion of "Open Government", approved by the order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated April 27, 2016 is dedicated to civil society institutions and the establishment of Dialogue Platform was especially recommended. Considering this recommendation, the Council initiated the following: "Various initiatives have been made regarding this issue and was successfully implemented. Furthermore, the establishment of dialogue platform in this format was necessary, considering the new stage of development of our country, challenges and duties. I am sure that dialogue environment created by our state will lead to a different quality stage. Cooperation and dialogue between government and civil society institutions are always beneficial and it is possible to solve some issues via dialogue".

Head of the Committee on State Building and Legislative Policy of the Parliament of Azerbaijan stated that such platform and dialogue are of great importance in the process of legal reforms and Constitutional reforms, and in new economic conditions, as well.

He noted that there is great confidence and trust in the country today: "Dialogue between government and civil society are reflected in National Action Plan. It embraces cooperation related to reforms. The aim of today's meeting is to establish new cooperation format. From this point of view, we will take responsibility by signing the memorandum today".

Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan, National coordinator of "Open Government" Partnership International Organization on Azerbaijan Vusal Huseynov stated that Azerbaijan joined "Open government" Partnership in 2011 and this initiative continues to operate successfully. He said that the creation of platform was necessary.

Memorandum on founding Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform on Promotion of "Open government" was discussed with the participation of civil society institutions and heads of NGOs. Representatives of NGOs stated their opinion and suggestions, talking about the necessity of platform in their speech.

Representatives of state institution, including Secretary of the Anti-Corruption Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan Kamal Jafarov, head of the Apparatus in the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ASAN) Azad Jafarli, head of Organizational and information provision department in Head Office of Anti-Corruption General Directorate under the Prosecutor General Orkhan Isayev, head of department of legal entities and state registration of civil status acts in the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan Rahim Rahimov, head of Tax policy department of Head Office on Tax policy and strategic analysis of the Ministry of the Republic of Azerbaijan Nijat Imanov, executive director of the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Farasat Gurbanov, member of the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Sahib Mammadov delivered a speech and answered the questions, shared their proposals and recommendations about future cooperation.

After the discussions, participants of the event (9 and 31 of them are representatives of government and civil society) signed the Memorandum on

establishment of Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform on Promotion of “Open government”.

In the end, head of “Constitution” Research Foundation Alimammad Nuriyev was elected the coordinator of the Platform.

Resident coordinator of the UN in Azerbaijan Gulam Isakzai and official of state delegation of the European Union Alexandra Nerisanu participated as an observer in the event.

### **Duties arising from state programs**

- **Actions within Development Concept “Azerbaijan – 2020: vision into the future”**

According to development concept, the Council held several events aimed at stimulating the activities of NGOs and improving cooperation between state institutions and civil society institutions. The Council organized 3 financial support competitions for NGOs and hundreds of NGO projects were financed through these competitions in order to support the solution of problems in different fields of public life. Besides contributing to the solution of public problems, NGOs also were paid within those projects. It helped to provide their employment, as well as improving their social situation.

Some works were done to involve NGOs in the preparation process of important state programs. Public discussion of “main directions of strategic map of national economics and main sectors of economics” was organized by the Council. The suggestions of NGOs related to separate sections of strategic road map were prepared and submitted to relevant state institutions.

Utilizing the potential of NGOs more efficiently, related to Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh conflict as indicated in the Concept is the priority of its current and strategic activity. 46 projects, dedicated to Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh conflict were financed in 2016. These projects were mainly focused on promotion of Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh conflict in foreign countries, and Azerbaijan in international arena, promotion of culture, establishment of relations with international organizations, promotion of national ideas of Azerbaijan within the country and upbringing of youth close to national Azerbaijan ideas. In general, the topics of projects mainly contain seminars, trainings, research and surveys, creation of websites and increasing services in current sites, organization of rally meetings, preparation of films and social videos, preparation of print materials for competitions, TV debates, exhibitions and promotion and the works done in social networking sites, as well. Print materials and other means of promotion have been prepared within the implemented projects. Generally, 4 books, 6 handbooks, 14 booklets, 6 brochures, 2 magazines were printed, and 2 sites and 6 films were prepared. The projects, implemented in foreign countries, include Hungary, Belgium, the Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, Germany, England, Bulgaria, Georgia, Turkey, Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark and Norway.

- **National Action Plan for the years between 2016 and 2018 on Promotion of “Open Government**

In the action plan the issues, such as determination of support to projects and initiatives of NGOs in the field of promotion of “Open government” principles and prevention from corruption, establishment of “Open government” Partnership Civil Society Platform and support to its activity were entrusted to the Council. Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform on Promotion of “Open government” was founded with the participation of representatives of state institutions and NGOs, organized by the Council, on September 9, 2016.

Events were held for providing information in the regions related to the presentation of Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform and the participation of Azerbaijan in "Open government" Partnership (OGP) International Initiative. Local state institutions and NGO representatives, as well as other public representatives participated in the events held in Lankaran, Ganja, Shaki, Sabirabad and Khachmaz.

Moreover, the Council included Promotion of "Open government" and increasing transparency in extractive industry, issues arising from National Action Plan for the years between 2016 and 2018 on Promotion of "Open Government", awareness raising and protection of rights of consumers in the competition topics. 14 projects dedicated to promotion of "Open government" were financed by the Council in 2016. 63 people were involved in the implementation of these projects, 31 events were organized in 14 regions (Baku, Sumgait, Ganja, Dashkasan, Gazakh, Mingachevir, Yevlakh, Aghdash, Ujar, Shirvan, Shamakhi, Ismayilli, Barda, Tartar, Zagatala, Gabala, Oghuz, Jalilabad, Gusar) of the country. A book, 2 booklets, "Azerbaijan advocate" magazine, 7 flyers, posters, and other promotion materials were printed, 15 articles were spread in electronic media, a research was done, a social video and 4 TV programs were prepared as a result of execution of projects.

6 projects were financed by the Council in 2016 on awareness raising of consumers and protection of their rights. 42 events were organized in 12 cities and regions of Azerbaijan (Baki, Sumgait, Beylagan, Jabrayil, Shirvan, Hajigabul, Siyazan, Guba, Gusar, Khachmaz, Oghuz, and Sabirabad) within those projects. As a result of projects, 4 booklets, 2 flyers, posters and other print materials were printed and a TV program was prepared.

- **Measures taken regarding State Program, covering the period up to 2013-2018 years, on "Fight against Narcotic drugs, Psychotropic substances and illicit trafficking of their precursors and Drug abuse"**

Activity on strengthening cooperation state institutions, operating to fight against narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and illicit trafficking of their precursors and drug abuse, and related NGOs continued by involving related non-governmental organizations in state Program. The Council especially stated this topic in the grant competition for NGOs in 2016 in order to provide their active participation in fight against drug abuse. 10 projects were financed in this sphere by the Council. The participants of the events, which were organized by specialized NGOs in fight against drug abuse, mainly comprised of youth. 5679 people participated in the events held within projects. 2195 people were children and teenagers, 1886 were youth, 1598 were those in different age groups. 6 trainings, 37 seminars and 11 various events were organized, 7 booklets and 5 social videos were prepared. Moreover, football match was organized aimed at improving physical training and health of youth in Sabirabad and campaign was held against drug abuse and dangerous addictions with participation of 100 young people. The events covered Ganja, Gazax, Goranboy, Yevlakh, Ismayilli, Shirvan, Aghjabadi, Bilasuvar, Masalli, Hajigabul, Saatli and Sabirabad, besides Baku. The projects were mainly in awareness raising, discussions on efficient organization of leisure time were organized with the participation of the young in the regions.

- **National Action Plan in increasing efficiency of protecting human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**The organization of the study of "Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment" and requirements of its Optional Protocol by employees of law enforcement authorities and other relevant institutions, including representatives of NGOs, specialized in the field of advocates and law, was entrusted to the Council. In 2016 the Council supported project proposals of 6 NGOs in the mentioned sphere. Within the projects:**

- Electronic version of “Set of laws for the privileged prisoners” was prepared, visits were organized to Law and Human Rights Institution of National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan and various prisons;
- the application of legislation regarding compulsory insurance against industrial accidents and diseases was investigated and a report was prepared;
- 5 seminars, where 125 people participated, were organized regarding labor rights for the youth in Shabran.
- A handbook on “Organization of public monitoring in municipalities” was printed and meeting with municipality employees were organized in Baku, Khachmaz, Ujar, Ismayilli and Zagatala;
- Meetings with the relatives of missing persons in the war, who are living in Baku, were held and psychological and social support was provided for them;
- Assistance in preparing appeals to state institutions regarding the right to social security, labor rights, housing, land disputes and various social issues, in compiling necessary legal documents and preparation of court applications was provided for a group of low-income population, living in Baku and Mingachevir, as well as Tovuz, Ismayilli, Sabirabad and Bilasuvar.
- **Action Plan regarding the announcement of “the Year of Multiculturalism” for 2016**

A conference was held in Zagatala and Gusar on “NGOs’ role in development of multicultural values and their duties”. Executive power of the region, representatives of NGOs and public participated in the event.

At the same time the Council allocated funds for 6 projects on protection and promotion of multicultural values of Azerbaijan. The projects covered different events on multiculturalism, promotion of Azerbaijan’s multicultural values abroad, integration of groups with various cultural and religious views, into unique civil society, organization of religious awareness in mass media within “2016 – the Year of Multiculturalism”, promotion of multicultural values among the youth in the regions. 2 social videos prepared, monitoring was conducted in press, competitions, art exhibitions were organized and campaigns were held on social networking sites. Events were held in Baku, Astara, Goychay, Shirvan, Jalilabad, Tovuz and other regions within the project.

### **Other events**

Round table discussion was held in the Council on “NGOs’ role in organization of public control” on January 14, 2016. Chairman of the Council, MP Azay Guliyev stated that President Ilham Aliyev’s emphasis on the importance of public control to the government’s activity in the last meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers is a challenge for NGOs. The Chairman of the Council noted that civil society institutions always supported President and his reforms. Heads of the NGOs made their suggestions regarding the issues that concern citizens and mechanisms of effective public control. Working Group was established on economic, social and public relations affairs within the meeting. It was decided that working groups will hold meetings in relevant ministries and Central Bank and discuss the proposals with respective authorities. At the same time it was decided to organize awareness seminars and meetings in both the capital and regions.

The Council held a report conference regarding its activities in 2015 on January 19, 2016. Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev stated that NGO sector developed in 2015. Chairman of the Council emphasized that some NGOs made mistakes regarding their contract liabilities in spite of the improvement in the execution of projects, financed by the Council, accountancy, developing electronic services and in other fields. Executive Director of the Council’s Secretariat delivered a report. Executive Director

noted that services in organizational, technical, methodical, financial and consultative fields in accordance with the main principles and forms of state support, mentioned in Concept of state support to non-governmental organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Regulation of the Council, stating that the Council held 23 meetings in 2015. 43 NGOs that implemented the best projects with financial support of the Council were awarded with an honorary diploma. 58 thousand mantas were taken back from 172 NGOs, which did not completely fulfill their contract commitments and it was given up to pay the second part of the grant to 6 organizations. Implementation of 28 NGO projects was considered as unsatisfactory. The film, dealing with the activity of the Council in 2015, and the book about financed projects were presented in the conference. Heads of NGOs stated that the Council operated productively and expressed their gratitude for the support that led to the improvement of the organizations.

A meeting with experts, evaluating NGO projects, was held with the participation of Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev and Executive Director of the Secretariat on January 21, 2016. It was noted in the meeting that several innovations will be applied in 2016 in order to provide transparency in high level. Each expert opinion and relevant score on NGO projects, which registered for competition in current year in the Council, will be publicly announced. It was emphasized that the projects will be evaluated, considering the results of expert opinions and no subjective approach and external interference will be possible.

A film named "Ceasefire", which was jointly produced by Hungarian Turan Foundation and International Eurasia Press Foundation with Council's financial support was demonstrated in Nizami Cinema Center on February 17, 2016. Assistant to the President for public and political issues Ali Hasanov, Chairman of the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Azay Guliyev, MPs, several embassies and representatives of some international organizations operating in our country, as well as press representatives participated in the presentation. At the end of the event special award of the Council was presented to head of Hungarian Turan Foundation Andras Biro and head of International Eurasia Press Foundation Umud Mirzayev. The documentary is the first joint production of Hungarian and Azerbaijani journalists, dealing with Karabakh truth within "Victim of the occupation" project. Historical stages of Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan in South Caucasus, history of Nagorno Karabakh conflict, including historical, cultural heritage and traditions of Azerbaijan as one of the leading states in South Caucasus were reflected in the film.

On February 22, 2016 Azerbaijan State Theatre of Young Spectators hosted the play titled "Red angel in Khojali" that was performed by Italian actors and financed by the Council. Innocent people, who lost their lives as a result of Khojali genocide, were commemorated before the play. Executive Director of the council's Secretariat delivered an opening speech. He provided information about Khojali genocide. He noted that Khojali genocide is commemorated both in the country and in foreign countries every year, different rallies and events are organized. "Justice for Khojali" campaign led by vice-president of Heydar Aliyev Foundation Leyla Aliyeva plays an important role in informing world community about the genocide. As a result of systematic works conducted within this campaign, numerous countries in America, Europe, Asia and Africa have recognized Khojali as genocide and adopted relevant documents". He informed that a play titled "Red angel in Khojali" was prepared by "Associazione Arci Bellezza" Organization of Italy with financial support of the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and was played in Milan by Italian actors. Gratitude letter of the Council was presented to Constanta Buhnevici, Alice Beatrice Carrino, Lunella Cherchi, Francesco Pacelli, Reza Dehghani Rostam and Christina Monica Mannella, as well as producer Nihad İsa for their high professionalism. Pierre Reychel, called as "protective angel" of Azerbaijani

captives, and worked in Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan of International Red Cross Committee is considered when stating "Red angel".

On March 17, 2016 a meeting was organized with NGOs that have partnership relation with NGOs and their coalitions and implemented joint projects in the Council. Chairman of the Council stated that the Council allocated funds for the projects of foreign NGOs, which promote national interests of Azerbaijan since 2013. Deputy Head of the Foreign Relations Department of the Presidential Administration Arastu Habibbayli stated that think tanks around the world and NGOs are the elements of soft power and use of this potential is one of the duties before our state. Heads of NGOs talked about relations with foreign NGOs their activities in the coalitions. At the end of the meeting it was noted that proposals of heads of NGOs will be generalized and National NGO Forum will be established.

On April 6, 2016 the Council held a meeting with NGOs on the recent escalation in the contact line. Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev emphasized that latest events in the contact line displayed the power of Azerbaijan's army. Chairman of the Council noted that the statements that will be adopted within the meeting express the will of public sector in Azerbaijan. Chairman called upon all NGOs to mobilize their opportunities in order to reply back slander and smear campaigns of Armenian Diaspora and continue promotion of Azerbaijan's position in the world. Appeals, addressed to Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev, international organizations, presidents of co-chairing countries in ISCE Minsk Group were adopted in the meeting. It is mentioned in the appeal to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev that successful operations led by the armed forces of Azerbaijan causes high mood in the society and thanks President for stable steps. In the appeals addressed to UN Secretary General, Chairman of the OSCE, President of OSCE PA, NATO Secretary General, PACE President, Chairman of European Parliament, presidents of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing states, they are called to take effective steps against Armenia, which keeps Azerbaijan's territory under occupation. A decision was made on the visits of NGOs to contact line and organization of a large conference. More than 700 NGOs joined the appeal.

More than 200 NGOs in the country addressed an appeal to world community regarding the war crimes committed by Armenia in the occupied territory of Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh on April 14, 2016. It is stressed in the document that the situation strained in the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Azerbaijan Republic, occupied as a result of operations of Armenian armed forces on April 2, 2016. Armed forces of Armenia killed and wounded 4 and 18 civilians, respectively. It is noted in the appeal that torture and degrading treatment on the bodies of killed Azerbaijani soldiers proves that Armenia grossly violates 1949 Geneva Convention for Protection of war victims. NGOs called upon international community to put sanctions against Armenia for war and crimes against humanity.

Presentation of "Aghdam five fragments" film, which prepared by "Matching point of Caucasus" organization of Belgium with financial support of the Council, was held on April 21, 2016. Executive Director of the Council's Secretariat said that the Council supports various projects of foreign NGOs, promoting peace, culture, multiculturalism, and Azerbaijan's national interests. "Aghdam. 5 fragments" film proves the aggressor policy of Armenia with facts, and provides information about the history, nature of Aghdam, and its situation before and after the war. Producer of the film and head of "Matching Point of Caucasus" organization Mishel Ivor said that he was very disappointed while visiting Aghdam. M.Ivor stated that although Aghdam was a very beautiful city before, it only remain in the minds of people, who lived there. Producer noted that he had met numerous people that lived there before the occupation and interviews of 5 people had been included in the film. MP of Aghdam Bakhtiyar Aliyev said that Aghdam is completely devastated, citizens were killed and expelled from their

origin of lands by force, and of course, it is a crime against humanity. Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev noted that the lives of more than 1 million refugees and IDPs are reflected in the film.

On April 28, 2016 The Council held a meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the year. Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev delivered his recommendations regarding the activity of the Council in different fields and duties. Executive Director of the Council's Secretariat reported about the work implemented. F.Gurbanov provided detailed information on trainings and information sessions organized in the regions, stating that the Council continued organizational-technical, methodical, informative, financial and consultative support to NGOs in the first quarter of the year. Reports of heads of international relations, analysis and expertise supervision of project management and program documentation, reception and clerical affairs, press and public relations sectors, as well as chief accountant and other employees of the Secretariat were heard in the meeting. Employees of the Secretariat, who distinguished for their activity over the last period, were awarded with the message of thanks.

On May 5, 2016 award ceremony of winners of "Shooting Championship among NGOs" organized by the Council on the occasion of the 93rd anniversary of National Leader Heydar Aliyev. Teams of "Azeri Land" Youth Public Union, Baku Youth Club, "Common sense" Youth Public Union, "Talented people with Disabilities" Public Union, "Constitution" Research Foundation and Binagadi District Executive Power, municipality, youth, New Azerbaijan Party and veterans took part in the championship. Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev and Head of Binagadi District Executive Power Khaladdin Isgandarov participated in the award ceremony of winners. Azay Guliyev and Khaladdin Isgandarov emphasized the importance of such kinds of championships in terms of strengthening patriotism among citizens, especially youth and improving their military training. After the award ceremony a meeting was held with youth on "Heydar Aliyev and Azerbaijani youth". Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev stated that National Leader Heydar Aliyev founded the fundamentals of statehood on strong basis and Ilham Aliyev continues this policy successfully.

On July 14, 2016 a conference was held on the activity of Council's Secretariat in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016. Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev opened the meeting and shared his opinions about the activity of the Secretariat in different spheres and future challenges. Executive Director of the Council's Secretariat reported about the Secretariat's activities in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016. Executive director informed about NGOs that applied to Appeal Commission after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grant competition in 2016 and the meeting of the Commission, as well. It was noted that deficiencies in the preparation of projects were explained to heads of NGOs after reviewing each project submitted to Appeal Commission in the meetings that was held within mutual understanding and discussion. Executive director spoke about the events organized in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016. Chief accountant, heads of international relation, analysis and expertise, supervision over the project implementation and program, press and public communications sectors, including other employees of the Secretariat reported in the conference.

On July 22, 2016 members of the commission on preparation of video materials and e-resources held a meeting with NGOs in the Council. Executive director of the Secretariat talked about the requirements of the Council regarding the video materials prepared within NGO projects that won in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grant competitions of 2016. Executive director noted that videos, films and other such kind of materials are of great importance if they are professionally prepared. Video materials, submitted to the Commission were reviewed.

On July 27, 2016 public discussion of "Fundamental directions of strategic road map on national economy and main sectors of economics" was organized in the

Council. Executive Director of the Secretariat of the Council emphasized the importance of preparing strategic road map of national economy in accordance with requirements of modern development. Executive Director stated that it is necessary for local NGOs to actively participate in the process, talking about the effectiveness of state actions for the development of Azerbaijan's economy. Executive Director of Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communications Vusal Gasimli stated that opportunities have been determined for the success of Azerbaijan in struggle for capital and markets globally within "Strategic road map of national economy". V.Gasimli gave information to NGO representatives about the activities of the Center since its establishment. Head of Support Foundation to Entrepreneurship and Market Economy Sabit Baghirov, president of "Constitution" Research Foundation Alimammad Nuriyev and head of "Economics" International Economic Research Public Union Fikrat Yusifov reported in the meeting.

On October, 2016 a conference was held regarding the activities of the Council's Secretariat in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2016. Chairman of the Council, MP Azay Guliyev shared his opinions about the activity of the Council of the Secretariat and future challenges. Executive Director of the Council's Secretariat Farasat Gurbanov stated that websites of the Council, such as [www.cssn.gov.az](http://www.cssn.gov.az), [www.qhtxeber.az](http://www.qhtxeber.az) and [www.e-qht.az](http://www.e-qht.az) were restored. These resources have been integrated into e-service portal, as well. It is planned to organize the presentation of the websites soon. Executive Director noted that evaluation modules are being prepared in order to completely prevent from possibility of subjective approach in the expertise of projects. Print and e-press bodies of the Council – [www.qhtxeber.az](http://www.qhtxeber.az) and "Civil society" journal have continued informative support during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2016. F.Gurbanov provided information about the events organized in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Chief accountant, heads of international relation, analysis and expertise, supervision over the project implementation and program, press and public communications sectors, including other employees of the Secretariat reported in the conference.

On November 7, 2016 Council's Working Group for Educational affairs held a public organization of bill on "Pre-school education" with participation of experts on education and relevant NGO representatives. Executive Director of the Council's Secretariat said that the Council organized the discussion of various bills that are on the agenda of legislative body within the cooperation with Parliament. Head of Working Group for Educational affairs and XXI Century Educational Center Etibar Aliyev and other NGO representatives expressed their gratitude to the Council for organizing public discussion of the bill and stated that it will be of great importance for our society. Experts emphasized that the discussion of bill on pre-school educational institutions is an important event, discussing about the role of kindergartens in forming social consciousness and preparation of human resources with high level capabilities. It was noted in the discussions that some provisions and terminology in the draft do not comply with the essence of education. They stressed the necessity of preparing the bill that is easy for all citizens to understand, as well. Giving priority to promotion of our mother tongue in educational complexes was emphasized. F.Gurbanov said that all opinions and proposals will be delivered to relevant committees of the Parliament by the Working Group.

On November 16, 2016 the Council organized events in the regions to present Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform on Promotion of "Open Government" and to inform about Azerbaijan's participation in "Open Government" Partnership International Initiative. Representatives of local state institutions and NGOs participated in the events held in Lankaran, Sabirabad and Khachmaz. Coordinator of the platform Alimammad Nuriyev reported on "Application of Open Government Initiative in Azerbaijan: "Government-Civil Society Dialogue Platform on Promotion of Open Government"" and provided detailed information about the work done and the participation of civil society in this process. The coordinator noted that active

participation of citizens in promotion of “Open government” in Azerbaijan is of great importance. It is planned to held similar events in Ganja and Shamkir.

On November 22, 2016 the Council organized a public discussion on studying opinions and suggestions of NGOs regarding the grant competition topics of 2017. Firstly, electronic software prepared by the Council for receiving projects was presented. Questions of NGOs on the use of this program were answered. Executive Director of the Council’s Secretariat stated that the Council improves the topics of grant competition every year in accordance with the Concept of state support to NGOs, suggests new topics, paying attention to priority affairs and the activity of the Council in different fields. Heads of NGOs made their proposals regarding grant competition of 2017.

On November 28, 2016 the Council held a conference on “The role and duties of NGOs in development of multicultural values” in Heydar Aliyev Center in Zagatala. Deputy Director of Socio-political and humanitarian department of regional executive power, director of Heydar Aliyev Center, head of Youth and Sports Department of Zagatala, heads of municipalities, chairman of the Council of Elders, editor of “Zagatala” newspaper, heads of trade unions on various fields and school directors took part in the event. Public representatives emphasized in the event that multicultural values are of great importance for our citizens.

## **International relations**

- **Meetings**

As in the previous years, the Council gave priority to cooperate with international organizations and with this purpose Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev held meetings with heads of several international organizations.

On February 2, 2016 ambassador of European Union to Azerbaijan Malena Mard;

On February 11, 2016 Ambassador of Sweden to Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan Ingrid Tersman;

On April 6, 2016 Ambassador of the Republic of France to Azerbaijan Oreliya Bushez;

On July 1, 2016 European journalists: Roberto Bonciorni, Patrisiya Lalond, Seda Serdar, Demir Murat Seyrek head of “Global Communications” that implements projects with the Council’s support;

On July 8, 2016 representatives of Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative;

On July 12, 2016 representative of Conrad Adenauer Foundation Tomas Shrapel, Charge d’Affaires of Federative Republic of Germany to Azerbaijan Volker Berreshaym;

On July 15, 2016 Charge d’Affaires of US Embassy to Azerbaijan Derec Hogan;

On August 8, 2016 former ambassador of Turkey to Azerbaijan Alper Joshgun;

On September 5, 2016 Resident Coordinator of UN in the Republic of Azerbaijan Gulamlsgazai;

On September 6, 2016 Ambassador of Germany to Azerbaijan Michael Kindsgrab;

On September 14, 2016 Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human rights defenders Michel Forst;

On September 15, 2016 representatives of religious community “Witnesses of Yelova”;

On November 24, 2016 employee of the International Cooperation Department of the European Commission of European Union Yari Haapla, responsible employee of the Commission on political affairs Sinziana-Elena Poiana, program assistant of section on civil society and the local self-government bodies Paolo Barabes, and employee of EU to Azerbaijan Alexandra Nerisanu were received in the Council.

The activities of the Council, state support to civil society organizations in our country and bilateral cooperation were discussed in all of these meetings.

- **Visits**

On February, 2016 senior advisor of the Council’s Secretariat Mustafa Gurbanli took part in the presentation of “Aghdam. 5 fragments” film, which was produced by the organization of “Matching point of Caucasus” of Belgium with the Council’s support.

Senior advisor of the Council’s Secretariat Mustafa Gurbanli participated in regional conferences, organized within regional project titled “Participation of Civil society in decision-making processes” of “Cooperation framework on programs”, which is implemented in Eastern countries by the Council of Europe and European Union on May 18-19, 2016.

Delegation led by the Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev visited Spain on September 19-24, 2016. The visit was organized within the project “Social and Economic Development Activity in Azerbaijan” that was carried out by Eastern-Western Management Institute with the support of Azerbaijani government and USA Agency for International Development. The visit was aimed at exchange of practice in transparency, public participation and fight against corruption. The delegation held meetings with mayor of Madrid Manuela Carmena, member of Board of Directors of Madrid, councilor on public participation, transparency and open government Pablo Soto Bravo, head of Board of Directors of Madrid Luis Cobosla, representatives of leading political parties in the Parliament of Spain, vice president of Valensia Monica Oltre, head of the International Department of the Chamber of Commerce of Barcelona Elizabeth Coll-Vinsent and representatives of leading civil society institutions in various cities of Spain. Chairman of the Council Azay Guliyev provided detailed information about the law “Public participation” signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on January 2014, activity of public councils under central executive power, regional and city executive powers and local self-government institutions, initiative of “Open government” implemented in our country, as well as results achieved as a result of increase in transparency and fight against corruption, activities of “ASAN service” centers and the actions taken in the field of development of civil society institutions in the country.

### **Participation of local NGOs in international events with the Council’s support**

1. The chairman of the Citizens' Labor Rights Protection League Sahib Mammadov participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> International Global Conference on Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative held in Lima, Peru on February 21-28, 2016.

2. Head of Karabakh Freedom Organization Akif Naghi took part in international conference of “International Forum against occupation, terrorism and unsubstantiated allegations” held in the cities of Turkey, such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Izmit, Sakarya on February 19-26, 2016.
3. Head of Public Union of “Women and modern world” Social Charity Center Sudaba Shiraliyeva took part in the annual conference in “UN Commission on the Status of Women” held in New York on March 14-18, 2016.
4. Head of “Cultural Development Center” Public Union Garay Alibayov participated in the event dedicated to Novruz holiday with “Azerbaijan-New York Association” in New York on March 14-16, 2016.
5. Head of “Study of Economic Resources” Public Union Ruslan Atakishiyev took part in “regional conference of UN Global Compact European Local Networks” held in Prague, the Czech Republic on May 3-7, 2016.
6. Head of “Central Asian and Southern Caucasian Freedom of Expression Network” Azer Hesret participated in the conference “Access to information and basic rights: it is your right!” held in Helsinki, Finland on May 2-4, 2016.
7. Head of Azerbaijan Future Studies Society Reyhan Huseynova participated in a conference “SHDM I: Policies and strategies to further promote tolerance and non-discrimination” in Vienna, Austria on April 13-16, 2016.
8. Head of Journalists Trade Union Mushfiq Alasgarli took part in annual meeting of European Federation of Journalists in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on April 24-27, 2016.
9. Head of Azerbaijan Journalist’ Network Ayaz Mirzayev took part in a conference on “Access to information and basic rights: it is your right!” in Helsinki, Finland on May 1-5, 2016.
10. Head of “Support for the Development of Public Relations” Shalala Hasanova took part in scientific conference on “Holocaust museums and monuments in Former Communist countries: modern problems of tolerance in Europe” in Riga, Latvia on May 15-16, 2016.
11. Head of “Humanitarian Intellectuals” Public Union Vugar Gadirov took part in the 43<sup>rd</sup> congress of Intellectual’s Council in Istanbul, Turkey on May 17-25, 2016.
12. Head of “Awareness of Youth of Demobilized Servicemen” Public Union Emin Hasanli participated in the 43<sup>rd</sup> congress of Intellectual’s Council in Istanbul, Turkey on May 17-25, 2016.
13. Head of Journalists’ Trade Union Mushfig Alasgarli participated in the event titled “Discussion of state of freedom of speech and expression in global media and new challenges” in Angers, France on June 6-10, 2016.
14. Head of Public Union of Azerbaijan Afghanistan veterans Mahammad Valiyev took part in the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of “Brotherhood of War” Public Organization of Veterans in Moscow, Russia on June 13-16, 2016.
15. The chairman of the Citizens' Labor Rights Protection League Sahib Mammadov took part in ODIHR’s annual conference on human dimension in Warsaw, Poland, and the 118<sup>th</sup> session of UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva, Switzerland on September 10 and November 30, 2016, respectively.

16. Head of Azerbaijan Journalists' Network Ayaz Mirzayev took part in international conference on "Freedom of the internet: permanent factor of democratic security in Europe" in Strasburg, France on September 15-20, 2016.
17. Head of "Youth in Free Entrepreneurship" Public Union Kamala Mammadli took part in the event "Enactus World Cup 2016" in Toronto, Canada from September 25 to October 6, 2016.
18. Head of "Central Asian and Southern Caucasian Freedom of Expression Network" Azer Hesret took part in the event organized by OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw, Poland on September 18-23, 2016.
19. Head of Association of Patients with Hemophilia Gulnara Huseynova participated in XXIX European Haemophilia Consortium in Stavanger, Norway on October 6-9, 2016.
20. Head of European Law Students' Association in Baku Mahammad Ismayilov participated in "Porto International Council Meeting" in Porto, Portugal on October 16-23, 2016.
21. Head of Women's Educational Association Shargiya Mammadova delivered teaching materials, textbooks, manuals and training programs to the students of unofficial Azerbaijani school in Istanbul, Turkey and participated in the event at that school.
22. Head of International Eurasia Press Foundation Umud Mirzayev took part in "World Congress of Office for International Peace" in Berlin, Germany between September 29 and October 3, 2016.
23. Head of "Central Asian and Southern Caucasian Freedom of Expression Network" participated in "freedom of expression and media – journalism and protection of journalists' rights during conflicts, including armed conflicts" in Vienna, Austria on October 26-29, 2016.
24. Head of Azerbaijan Student Youth Organization Union Shahin Ismayilov took part in the conference on "Youth role in preventing from extremism" in Istanbul, Turkey on October 19-23, 2016.
25. Representative of Economic and Social Development Center Ahmad Alili participated in "Shanghai Global Think Tank Forum" held in Shanghai, China on November 8-12, 2016.
26. Head of "Intellect" Public Union on support to scientific and technical development Yasin Karimov took part in "the 6<sup>th</sup> All-Russian Forum" in Moscow, Russia on November 16-21, 2016.
27. Head of "Healthy Development and Awareness" Public Union Anar Khalilov took part in the conference of Eastern Partnership to organize an exhibition on "Khojali-25" in Brussels, Belgium on November 27-30, 2016.
28. Head of Journalists' Trade Union Mushfig Alasgarli took part in the conference held with the organization of European Journalists' Federation in Istanbul, Turkey on November 28-30, 2016.
29. Head of Azerbaijan Journalists' Network Ayaz Mirzayev took part in the meeting of OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg, Germany on December 6-11, 2016.

30. Head of Research Foundation of "Constitution" Alimammad Nuriyev and head of Eurasian Cooperation Foundation Naila Hashimova took part in Global Summit of "Open Government" Partnership in Paris, France on December 6-12, 2016.
31. Head of "Humanitarian Intellectuals" Public Union Vugar Gadirov took part in the event on Russia-Europe-Turkey relation in Istanbul, Turkey on December 15-22, 2016.

### **Conclusion**

The Council made a contribution to the encouragement of civil society in the country, implementing the issues arising from the Concept on state support to non-governmental organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2016. In future, the Council considers enriching management practice of local NGOs, as well as forming efficient management skills, developing expert reserves, upgrading electronic services, establishment of new electronic recourses, preparation and implementation of new projects and programs, aimed at developing NGO sector, strengthening cooperation with international organizations and foreign NGOs, encouraging public supervision functions of NGOs and other issues.