



## Press-Release

On November 08, 2006 at International Press Center the National Budget Group held round table on “Open Budget Index and Azerbaijan”. Governmental officials, representatives of international organizations, NGOs and Mass Media participated at this round table. .

The Open Budget Index prepared by International Budget Project ([www.internationalbudget.org](http://www.internationalbudget.org)) is document reflecting availability of public to get information on budget and financial accountability of the government. The Index is prepared by averaging answers to 122 questions on Open Budget Questionnaire. The questions focusing on the contents and timeliness of the seven key budget documents use criteria based on generally accepted good practices related to public financial management. Many of these reflect or are drawn from criteria developed by multilateral organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund's *Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency* and the *Uma Declaration of Guidelines on Auditing Precepts* issued by the United Nations International Organization of Supreme Auditing Institutions. However, the *Open Budget Questionnaire* covers additional topics of importance to civil society. For example, the questionnaire examines whether or not the legislature holds public hearings as well as the performance and design of the government's auditing body.

The Open budget Index-2006 includes 59 countries. Civil society institutions and scientific research organizations from these 59 countries participated in preparation of the Index. This research is intended to assist civil society organizations, journalists, researchers, and economic development specialists to advocate for the improved public sector financial accountability that will lead to concrete improvements in people's lives. It is also intended to allow government officials and policymakers in the countries involved in the survey to identify specific measures necessary to improve budget transparency and accountability.

The index estimated public access to 7 main budget documents. Azerbaijan is among the countries that provide minimum information to the public. So that all the countries were grouped as providing *extensive, substantial, some, minimum and scant or no information*. Azerbaijan scored 30% of total 100%. Of the 7 main budget documents only executive's budget proposal is available to public. In-year, mid-year, year-end and audit reports are produced, but for internal use only, which means not available for the public. Pre-budget statement and citizen's budget are not produced at all. So, with all these indicators Azerbaijan has 45th place and is among 12 other countries providing minimum information. The first places are occupied by France, The United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Africa, Slovenia and USA.

The National Budget Group was established in the February of 2006 with mission of transferring initiatives on effective usage of budget into public interest.