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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, to the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt With by the OSCE Minsk Conference, and to the Head of the OSCE High Level Planning Group

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 9, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States warmly welcomes the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, together with the Chairmanship's Personal Representative, to the Permanent Council. Mr. Chair, I would like to echo your warm welcome for Andrew Schofer and wish him every success in his new position. As a Co-Chair country, the United States reiterates our strong support for your work and we appreciate your unwavering engagement with the sides to advance a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We thank all of you, including the Head of the High Level Planning Group (HLPG), for your insightful reports and updates.

The United States welcomes the joint statement by the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan following the October 16 summit organized by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group in Geneva. This summit was an important signal showing that the sides are ready to re-engage in negotiations in good faith. We are pleased that the presidents agreed to take urgently needed measures to reduce tensions along the Line of Contact, and we encourage the sides to build on this positive momentum and refrain from mutual accusations and recriminations.

Mr. Chair, we reiterate our calls for the sides to implement the measures agreed upon at the summits in Vienna and St. Petersburg in May and June 2016, respectively. The sides agreed then to expand the monitoring by the Office of the Chairmanship's Personal Representative, which we hope can eventually be reflected in the 2018 OSCE budget. The United States also encourages the sides to work on the proposal to establish an OSCE investigative mechanism.

Ambassador Kasprzyk, we appreciate your assessment of the situation on the ground – that it is relatively stable, but tense, and that even a small ceasefire violation could spiral quickly out of control. The work of your agile, small, yet highly effective mission to promote transparency and confidence among the sides is indispensable, and deserves all of our full and unconditional support.

The United States appreciates the close collaboration of the Austrian Chairmanship and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office in supporting the Co-Chairs' mediation efforts and stabilizing the situation on the ground.

We also support confidence-building measures and increased dialogue between Armenians and Azerbaijanis that can help stabilize the security situation and create a more constructive atmosphere for negotiations. Those participating in dialogue must be able to do so freely, without fear of harassment when they return home.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, we share the frustration of the sides that this conflict has indeed gone on far too long, and we believe the status quo is unacceptable. At the same time, we all agree that there can be no military solution to the conflict. As a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, the United States remains deeply committed to working with the sides to find a lasting and peaceful resolution to the conflict, one based on the principles shared by participating States of non-use of force, territorial integrity, and equal rights and self-determination, as embraced in the Helsinki Final Act.

Thank you again, Mr. Chair.

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