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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

STATEMENT

**delivered by Mr. Ashot HOVAKIMIAN, Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia
at the 2017 Annual Security Review Conference**

Working session II
**Conflict and crisis situations in the OSCE area: building security and
confidence**

28 June, 2017

Let me start by thanking key note speakers who presented their views on different crisis and conflict situations. In making our contribution to this session we are guided exclusively by its title which is agreed by consensus by all participating states and provides an opportunity to discuss various crisis situations requiring urgent attention from the perspective of stabilizing and confidence building measures.

In my intervention I would like to refer to stabilizing and confidence building measures in those situations which have been recently marked by use of force.

The use of force by Azerbaijan continues to constitute a serious threat to the regional security and seriously damages the efforts of peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. When I refer to use of force by Azerbaijan I do not exclusively refer to the last year April escalation which was in fact a culmination of ongoing consistent policy, but not its end.

This policy entails erosion of ceasefire regime through various acts of violence including incursions, intentionally targeting civilian and military infrastructure along the Line of Contact between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh and state borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

International community vis-a-vis international mediators responded to this evolving security threat by proposing de-escalation and confidence building measures through stronger OSCE involvement. These measures entailed increasing monitoring capacity of the PRCiO and establishing an OSCE mechanism of investigation into cease-fire violations.

Though Azerbaijan initially agreed to these proposals at two 2016 Summits in Vienna and St. Petersburg mediated by leaders and high representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries, however, it refused to implement those agreements.

As a result, after more than one year of massive use of force by Azerbaijan along Nagorno-Karabakh Line of Contact the situation remains tense marked by periodical escalation.

The systematic and apparent cease-fire violations by Azerbaijan reached to the point that even absence of investigation mechanism does not serve an obstacle to identify their source. It was the case a month ago when the Minsk Group Co-Chairs clearly identified Azerbaijan as a country who initiated a serious ceasefire violation by firing missile and striking military equipment along line of contact. This June the Co-Chairs expressed deep concern over the recent violations of the ceasefire and appealed to the leadership of Azerbaijan to avoid further escalation.

We don't know whether specified and targeted condemnation of the ceasefire violations will help Azerbaijan to get rid of illusions that it is able to impose its will over people of Nagorno-Karabakh by resorting to military force. In 1993 even four UN SC resolutions could not persuade Azerbaijan to stop war in Nagorno-Karabakh and it is the Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Army who compelled Azerbaijan to seek and finally request ceasefire.

We firmly believe that it is possible to avoid outbreaks of new hostilities and de-escalate current situation. The implementation of security and confidence building measures agreed at Vienna and St. Petersburg Summits can diffuse tensions, ensure stronger OSCE involvement on the ground and create conditions for advancing peace process.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are encouraged that the international community speaks in one voice when it comes to necessity of preventing outbreak of hostilities in our region. However, there is an unfortunate exception here. Open support stated and provided by Turkey on the

highest level to Azerbaijan in committing ceasefire violations is serious factor of deterioration. Under current circumstances which are also shaped by continued two decades long illegal land blockade by Turkey, Armenia has to seek ways to mitigate negative impact of this policy in the OSCE as well.

We have always stressed our readiness to use the OSCE as a platform for dialogue with any participating State, including Turkey. However, our requests for clarification, including on military exercises with Azerbaijan, remain unanswered under technical pretexts.

Last year in this very session I was assured by Turkish representative that on the next meeting of Permanent Council Turkey would give a clarification on the fate of confiscation of the Armenian religious property, including 14th century old Armenian Church St Giragos in Sur District of Diyarbakir, Turkey. Unfortunately, one year passed and this “next meeting of the Permanent Council” did not arrive so far. We believe that even in very difficult situations countries are subject to OSCE commitments and principles.

In our view, strengthening OSEC involvement is essential in building security and confidence in crisis and conflict situations.

Thank you.