

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Zohrab Mnatsakanyan,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia
at the 25th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council**

Milan, 6 December 2018

Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I also want to thank our Italian colleagues and the Chairman-in-Office, Minister Milanese, for their able leadership of the Organization throughout the year.

Mr. Chairman,

This is a special year for Armenia. The victory of the peaceful Velvet Revolution in May manifested the decisive resolve of the Armenian public to embrace progress and reforms aimed at fighting corruption, strengthening the justice system and the rule of law, consolidating democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The public protests in Armenia and their outcome have demonstrated the strength of our public, its institutions, the civil society and their evolution to a considerably high level of political maturity and legal literacy. Of particular significance is the distinctly strong role of the youth and women, who stood at the forefront of the Revolution.

In three days we will hold early parliamentary elections. The Armenian people will be guaranteed to make a genuinely free choice. This is our firm and unwavered political will. In line with our commitments and to ensure transparency of the electoral process the Armenian Government has invited relevant international organization, including the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to observe the elections.

Mr. Chairman,

30 years ago the people of Nagorno-Karabakh stood up in a renewed struggle against historical injustice and for self-determination, human dignity and freedom. The rejection to acknowledge these basic human rights and the use of force against their peaceful aspirations is the root cause of the conflict. The existential threat to the security and lives of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh is the root cause of the conflict. For three decades the people of Nagorno-Karabakh have been resolute in building life and institutions in dignity and resisting atrocities, coercion and aggression from Azerbaijan. The continuation of the coercive policies, the use of force and the threat of use of force by Azerbaijan prolong the resolution of the conflict, incurring further sufferings on all peoples of the region. There is no alternative to the peaceful and negotiated settlement. The illusions of making gains under the barrel of the gun are doomed to failure.

The new government of Armenia has firmly reiterated its commitment to the exclusively peaceful resolution of the conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship. The political

transformation in Armenia has not affected the peace process and in the past seven months we have been engaged in a dynamic way in meetings and discussions. During the meeting between the Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of Azerbaijan at the end of September in Dushanbe practical agreements were reached on reducing risks of escalation, consolidating ceasefire and the establishment of an operational direct line between the sides.

Yesterday I had a meeting with my Azerbaijani colleague for the third time in six months. We came up with a joint statement together with the heads of delegations of the co-chair countries. It is encouraging indeed that we managed to agree on a common text. It reiterates the importance of the implementation of the understanding reached in Dushanbe to work intensively to further reduce tensions in the conflict zone and prepare the populations for peace.

An atmosphere conducive to peace is essential for the process of negotiations. The Dushanbe arrangements as well as the implementation of the previous agreements on confidence building measures will make a tangible contribution in this regard. Genuine efforts to prepare the populations for peace on all sides of the conflict and abandoning bellicose rhetoric and hate speech are as significant.

Risk reduction measures need to be strongly supported by all OSCE participating States. Sale and delivery of offensive weaponry promotes the use of force and the threat of it. The involved participating States should reconsider their practices. What some may claim as business is a weapon of death to our people.

The status and security of Nagorno-Karabakh are at the core of the conflict and thus of its resolution.

Mr. Chairman,

In three days, on 9 December the world will mark the 70th anniversary of the UN Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In March this year the UN Human Rights Council unanimously adopted a resolution on genocide prevention, initiated by Armenia. In 2015 at our initiative the UN General Assembly proclaimed 9 December as an International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime.

Mr. Chairman,

We have initiated a respective Declaration with the delegation of Cyprus on the 70th anniversary of the Convention and we hope that the opportunity is still not lost for this body to express the resolve of the OSCE in support of this Convention, which remains as relevant as ever.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to welcome Slovakia as the incoming Chair and wish them every good luck and our support.

Thank you.