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AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASININ
ATƏT YANINDA
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**27th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council
Tirana, 3-4 December 2020**

Closing session

The Delegation of Azerbaijan congratulates the Albanian Chairmanship on the impressive achievements during the 27th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting. Azerbaijan also would like to express its congratulation to the representatives newly appointed to the top four OSCE positions - OSCE Secretary-General and heads of institutions. We believe that these appointments and consensus achieved on this issue opened a new page in OSCE history.

For small countries like Azerbaijan which attaches particular importance to the OSCE, the criteria and diversity of the appointed candidates are much appreciated. We wish to share the sentiments voiced by previous colleagues who also commended the efforts of the Albanian Chairmanship in the times of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and impact it had on our societies and life, and added a new layer of challenges in the OSCE.

Azerbaijan - both individually and as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) - has initiated several ideas and proposals in relation to the pandemic. One of them was the special session of the UN General Assembly on the response to the COVID-19. It was supported by the overwhelming majority of the UN members States and held on 3-4 December 2020. A number of heads of states and governments joined the special session and expressed their views and positions on how the international community can effectively contribute to the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

We would like to stress that the only country in the world that objected to this initiative was the Republic of Armenia - a country which in fact was severely impacted by the pandemic. But, because it was the initiative by the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Government of Armenia tirelessly tried to prevent it from succeeding. It objected to the statement of Azerbaijan delivered in our capacity as the Chair of the NAM at the opening of the special session of the UN General Assembly as well as to the initiative as a whole. Thus, one can imagine the poisonous mindset of the Government of Armenia, with whom we are dealing in the region.

This has not happened in a day. It is a result of the inefficient mediation process of the last nearly 30 years. Of course, there were some suggestions and results as well as the basis prepared by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. Yet, have they prevented the poisonous mindset of the Armenian government, which is opposing to anything coming from Azerbaijan just because it is my country's proposal? Have the mediators informed the international organizations about such attitude existing in the Armenian society against Azerbaijan? Azerbaijan doubts it, and we have never heard about it.

Nevertheless, the year 2020 was specifically important and historic for Azerbaijan, because after 44 days of military counter-offensive operation Azerbaijan and its proud Armed Forces have managed to put an end to one of the most protracted conflicts in the OSCE history. Since the end of 1980s and beginning of 1990s Azerbaijan had been facing military aggression and continued occupation of its territories by Armenia. The suffering of my country has been recognized by many multilateral institutions, including the UN Security Council, OSCE, Council of Europe and others. Azerbaijan for almost 30 years had been pleading the international community, in particular OSCE participating States, to convince Armenia to behave within international law and try to alleviate the sufferings of one million Azerbaijanis, who became refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Can you imagine that every tenth person in Azerbaijan is a refugee or IDP? This was a taboo topic in the OSCE, because Armenia blocked any discussion on this issue within the organization.

Within 44 days Azerbaijani armed forces realized a heroic mission and restored historical justice. Azerbaijan restored its infringed territorial integrity and sovereignty. Azerbaijan put an end to the conflict by politico-military means, because it was forced to do so. Armenia's protagonists, who are still in place, claimed that the principles of the OSCE on the territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders could be applied to other conflicts but not to the case of Azerbaijan. We have enforced the UN Security Council resolutions by ourselves and restored justice - this is a triumph of international law and supremacy of the UN Security Council resolutions and OSCE decisions.

Azerbaijan has been approached with requests and appeals by some countries willing to help with post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Azerbaijan is ready to cooperate on that, but first - the trilateral agreement must be implemented. It is not only a ceasefire. The trilateral agreement was agreed by both sides to the conflict. Armenia and Azerbaijan have undertaken a set of commitments and obligations on a wide spectrum of issues, which have to be implemented. Therefore, help us by supporting implementation of the agreement. Unfortunately, what we heard during this Ministerial Council is absolutely different. OSCE participating States must realize the alternative to non-implementation of the trilateral agreement and understand what could happen in case Armenia does not implement its commitments. That would be a suicide for this country. Within 44 days, we have destroyed almost 90 per cent of the entire military hardware of the Armenian armed forces illegally deployed in the territories of Azerbaijan. One can imagine what a heavy blow Azerbaijan has dealt to this country. Yet we were not the one who started it all, we responded to it.

Azerbaijan expects that OSCE participating States will support and encourage the implementation of obligations under trilateral agreement. It is imperative that OSCE participating States communicate clear messages to Armenia that such obsolete, falsified and poisonous statements as we heard by the Delegation of Armenia today should be intolerable, because they do not bring positive dynamic nor serve the interests of the OSCE security. Azerbaijan believes that the war is over, while some others still encourage Armenia to behave like the war goes

on, thereby suggesting thoughts of revanchism, which could jeopardize the implementation of trilateral agreement.

We would like to stress that Azerbaijan is ready to discuss what OSCE can do on this issue, but we will not accept pressure and imposition of obsolete concepts that still exist in some minds. OSCE needs to look at the situation on the ground and accept the new reality. Azerbaijan concluded and passed the military stage of the conflict. Now we have to focus on how to build peace. Thus, we encourage the OSCE participating States to provide support and help to this end.

Finally, I would like to respond to the Delegations of the USA on the allegation that Azerbaijan blocked one of the two decisions in the second dimension. Distinguished Ambassador Gilmore may be does not know this due to his recent arrival to the OSCE, but his delegation to OSCE shall be aware of the fact that the USA - alongside some other Delegations - was the one who blocked decisions on environment in 2018 and 2019. The OSCE is organization that consists of 57 participating states and we all have to take mutual steps towards each other for the sake of consensus. Compromise cannot be unilateral.

During discussions of the mentioned draft decision Azerbaijan exhibited constructive attitude. We understand that explicitly mentioning wildlife in this text may be of particular importance to the USA, but Azerbaijan also has its strong interests reflecting the situation on environment in our country. In view of this we suggested four alternative options aimed at finding consensus. We proposed to enumerate broader range of natural resources or refer to them generally without mentioning anything in specific. However, none of our suggestions got accepted. Thus, the Delegation of Azerbaijan cannot be blamed for the lack of flexibility and constructiveness. However, we believe that the next year this discussion can continue and OSCE participating States will be able to finally reach consensus on this matter.

In conclusion, Azerbaijan believes that this would be one of the last mentioning of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship, and we can move on from confrontation to cooperation in terms of the post-conflict situation in Azerbaijan. We would like to congratulate once again Albanian Chairmanship for such impressive results at the 27th OSCE Ministerial Council meeting.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.