

AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASININ
ATƏT YANINDA
DAİMİ NÜMAYƏNDƏLİYİ



PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
TO THE OSCE

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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1402nd Meeting of the Permanent Council
15 December 2022**

*Continued non-implementation by Armenia of its
obligations under the Trilateral Statements, including its
involvement in unlawful economic and other activities in the
territory of Azerbaijan and its environmental damage*

Mr. Chair,

The Delegation of Azerbaijan would like to update the Permanent Council on the recent post-conflict developments in the normalization process between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the situation in the region.

Since the signing of the Trilateral Statement of November 2020, that put an end to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, along with large-scale post-conflict recovery, reconstruction and reintegration works, Azerbaijan has also initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations with Armenia. Despite devastating consequences and unhealed wounds of war and occupation, Azerbaijan offered Armenia peace based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their state borders. For the past two years Azerbaijan has been demonstrating strong political will to promote the peace agenda. At meetings held this year in Brussels, Prague and Sochi at the highest level, both sides confirmed their mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders.

Despite increased dynamism in bilateral negotiations, the progress remains rather limited in three major tracks of Armenia-Azerbaijan inter-state normalization process, namely, signing a peace treaty, delimitation of borders and opening of all regional communications. In all three dimensions, Armenia sticks to past practice of imitation rather than engaging genuinely into the process. Constant delays by the Armenian side in implementing the provisions of the trilateral statements using various lame excuses and using every occasion to raise tensions clearly demonstrate Armenia's non-constructive and disruptive attitude towards its obligations stipulated in these statements and other agreements.

Armenia still refuses to fully withdraw its armed forces and illegal armed formations from the territory of Azerbaijan, where the peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, as envisaged by Article 4 of the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement. Armenia keeps misusing the Lachin road for military purposes in contravention of the provisions of the trilateral statement, which provide for the use of this road only for citizens, vehicles and goods.

Armenia continues its illegal military activities in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed. This includes illegal military build-up, rotation of its armed forces and illegal transfer of weapons and personnel to this territory and resorting to other

military provocations. Transfer to the territories of Azerbaijan and implantation of new anti-personnel mines produced in 2021, i.e. after the signing of the trilateral statement in November 2020 is one of the major threats to the large-scale restoration and reconstruction work carried out in the post-conflict period, to the civilian population working in these areas, as well as to the return of internally displaced persons and to their peaceful life in their homes. Suffice to mention that since August this year, some 2728 anti-personnel landmines produced in Armenia in 2021 have been detected in the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan. Just yesterday, seven people were injured and one was killed in mine blast in Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan. Four of them were employees of a company engaged in repair and reconstruction works in the region.

Of particular concern is that the Shusha-Lachin road is being used not only for unlawful military activities, but also for trafficking of minerals and other wealth from the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan to Armenia and elsewhere. This is a blatant abuse of the Lachin road envisaged for exclusively humanitarian purposes.

Over the past years, the Delegation of Azerbaijan presented to the Permanent Council irrefutable well-documented evidence attesting to the direct involvement of Armenia in unlawful economic and other activities in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan for its own economic gain in flagrant violation of international law. Armenia's unlawful actions included, *inter alia*, implantation of settlers from Armenia and abroad, destruction and appropriation of historical and cultural heritage, permanent infrastructure changes, exploitation and pillage of natural resources and other forms of wealth, accompanied by substantial and systematic interference with the public and private property rights.

On the screen you can see some of the imagery obtained from our satellites back in 2019, which depict depredatory exploitation of natural resources in Azerbaijan and the related environmental damage.

In particular, Armenia-registered companies and entities and their subsidiaries, including *Base Metals CJSC*, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Armenia's *Vallex Group CJSC* have been heavily engaged in mining of precious minerals and metals, which was one of the main enterprises in the formerly occupied territories. There had been an illegal traffic in natural resources across the formerly occupied section of the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Armenia was essentially turned into a transport base for trafficking of minerals and other wealth from the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan to international markets.

According to the information obtained by the relevant Azerbaijani authorities, some of which is available publicly, illegal exploitation and pillage of natural resources in Azerbaijan not only continued after the end of the conflict, but expanded, especially in the Gyzybulag gold and Demirli copper-molybdenum deposits. Depredatory exploitation and depletion of the natural resources severely damage the environment. Thousands of hectares of forests are cut due to exploitation of the mines. There are already millions of tons of tailings in tailing dumps as a result of extensive mining activities. Hazardous leaks from tailing dumps and ponds at the mining sites are polluting the occupied territories and destroying the fragile ecosystems there.

On 3 December 2022 the officials of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Service for Real Estate Affairs under the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the "AzerGold" Closed Joint Stock Company held discussions with the command of the Russian peacekeeping forces temporarily deployed in the territories of Azerbaijan. During the meeting, the representatives of the relevant Government agencies requested on-site

inspection of mineral deposits, especially Gyzybulag and Demirli mines, monitoring, organization of natural resources inventory and cadastral accounting of property, assessment of potential environmental damage and risks, including impact on underground and surface water sources. As a follow up to this meeting a road map was prepared by the Azerbaijani authorities.

On 10 December, the representatives of Azerbaijani Government agencies, environmental civil society organizations and media while trying to visit the above-mentioned mines in accordance with the agreement reached were confronted by unidentified persons and were not allowed to continue monitoring activities in these areas. This caused justified indignation of the public which led to peaceful protests continuing to date.

Azerbaijan urged the Russian peacekeeping contingent's command to honour the agreements reached and to ensure Azerbaijan's representatives' unhindered access to the above-mentioned areas. It was emphasized that it is unacceptable to obstruct such an expert visit or to impose any conditions. The matter will be resolved with the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent.

We strongly reject the baseless allegations of Armenia, trying to shift the blame on Azerbaijan for the latest situation on the Shusha-Lachin road. Claims that Azerbaijan allegedly violates the provisions of trilateral statements and "blocked" the Lachin road are groundless. On the contrary, representatives of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Service for Real Estate Affairs under the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the "AzerGold" Closed Joint Stock Company as well as civil society organizations and media want to use this road to visit the areas of Azerbaijan to conduct on-site monitoring and assessment of environmental situation. They do not interfere with the movement of the civilian vehicles. Supply vehicles of the Russian peacekeeping contingent freely use this road. So, any questions on the passage through this road should be directed to the Russian peacekeeping contingent, which erected barricades on this road. Azerbaijan fulfills its obligations in full, and strongly demands that Armenia also complies with its obligations. Azerbaijan is ready to facilitate humanitarian needs of all Armenian residents living on its territories.

Outcry in Armenia about alleged so-called "blockade" also does not withstand any scrutiny, given refusal of Armenia to open all regional transport and communication routes between the two countries, including railways and highways, which is envisaged by the Article 9 of the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement and another trilateral statement of 11 January 2021. Armenia delays the process of providing coordinates for the construction of a highway that will ensure unimpeded movement between the mainland Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic on the one hand, and international transport between the two countries and through their territories, on the other. Azerbaijan's recent constructive offer to move forward on the railway connection in an effort to break the impasse also was not reciprocated in Armenia, which is indicative that this country is not conducting discussions in good faith.

The military provocation by Armenia along the state border in September 2022 and ensuing escalation is illustrative of an urgent necessity to start as soon as possible the process of delimitation and demarcation of state border without preconditions and unfounded allegations, especially by third parties. Yet, on this track too, Armenia puts forward preconditions that delay the process.

Accusations of Armenia of so-called "ethnic cleansing" are ridiculous against the background of practice of Armenia in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan over the past 28 years elevated to a state policy aimed at consolidating the occupation of these territories and preventing hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani IDPs from returning to their homes and properties. Azerbaijan is resolute

to re-integrate its citizens of Armenian origin residing in post-conflict territories, guaranteeing the same rights and freedoms with all the citizens of Azerbaijan. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides the solid legal framework in this regard. We stress once again that the issue of the rights and security of Armenian residents living in the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan is an internal matter of Azerbaijan.

Increased dialogue and contacts between the central Azerbaijani authorities and local ethnic Armenian residents aim at ensuring peaceful co-existence and need to be encouraged and sustained. This was the case, for example, when during construction of the new road bypassing the city of Lachin, there were contacts of Azerbaijani side with local Armenian residents of Azerbaijan. A large part of the construction process was carried out without observation of the temporarily deployed Russian peacekeeping contingent. Moreover, the direct contacts were established when Azerbaijani specialists with local experts visited and conducted technical monitoring of Sarsang water reservoir in August 2022.

The events of the recent days demonstrate that the revanchist forces in Armenia and elsewhere are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with these positive developments and shrinking influence of Armenia on the ground in general, and in particular, on Armenian population of Azerbaijan and resort to all kinds of provocations to raise tensions. Parachuting of rogue businessman Ruben Vardanyan with dubious background into Garabagh region of Azerbaijan is also a clear sign of this.

The role of certain third parties to embolden Armenia's revanchist behavior is also cause for serious concern, as it tempts Armenia to resort to increased military provocations and bellicose rhetoric.

We stress once again that while continuing undertaking post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and peace-building efforts and implementing commitments stemming from the trilateral statements, Azerbaijan will also take appropriate resolute measures in order to repel any provocations and ensure the protection of Azerbaijan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of its internationally recognized borders.

We urge Armenia, if this country is genuinely interested in peace and stability in the region, to put an end to statements and actions against sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, to desist from its long-held pattern of behavior, which is to undermine reached agreements and evade the implementation of its commitments, abandon its attempts aimed at undermining the process of post-conflict normalization and ensure that necessary further steps are taken in this direction. This has no alternative.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.