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Statement
by the President of the Republic of Armenia H.E. Serzh Sargsyan
at the OSCE Summit
2 December 2010, Astana

Distinguished President Nazarbayev,
Madam Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting of the Heads of States participating in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is, in a way, unique: This is the first summit of the OSCE in the 21st century and the first to be held in the post-Soviet area. I would like to congratulate the Kazakhstani colleagues and personally President Nursultan Nazarbayev for active chairmanship and excellent organization of the Summit.

Nations living in the realm of the OSCE have been closely following and waiting with hope and anticipation for the holistic implementation of the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act with hope and anticipation. The people of Nagorno Karabakh are one of them, eligible to expect the implementation of these principles and commitments, which are universal regardless of the size of a country, its population, or natural resources.

Nagorno Karabakh proclaimed its independence in September 1991, followed by the referendum on independence conducted in December in full compliance with the norms of international law and Soviet legislation which was in effect at the time. With the subsequent disintegration of the USSR, two legally equal state entities emerged: the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. In response to the policy of ethnic cleansing and full-fledged military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Karabakh in 1992, the unrecognized, yet legitimate state of Nagorno Karabakh, in the face of imminent extinction of its people, was forced to resort to its right to self-defense in full compliance with the norms of international law.

Failing to purge Nagorno Karabakh of its Armenian population by military action, in May of 1994 Azerbaijan had to conclude a tripartite ceasefire agreement with Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia. The ceasefire could have transformed into a foundation for the establishment of durable peace in the interests of the peoples of the region.

Under the guise of negotiations and contrary to the efforts of the Minsk Group, Azerbaijan has used the subsequent 16 years to make preparations for a new reckless military scheme. Baku assumes that the cause-and-effect relationship behind the Karabakh conflict has been forgotten. By evoking today the need to reclaim territories currently under the control of the Nagorno Karabakh Self-Defense Army, Azerbaijan fails to acknowledge that it is impossible to eliminate the consequences of aggression without addressing the root cause of the conflict.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As far as I know, Azerbaijan is the only country on the European continent that boasts the manifold increase in its military spending. However, no necessary actions have been taken with regard to Azerbaijan's flagrant violation of the permissible levels of the armaments stipulated by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe; moreover, offensive weapons are being sold to Azerbaijan, including by some OSCE member states. All this is accompanied by blatant Armenophobic statements of the Azerbaijani leaders, and by calls which incite animosity, aggression, and violence. It has reached the point where Azerbaijani officials miss no opportunity to claim that the capital of Armenia, Yerevan, is located "on historical Azeri lands". Recently in UNESCO they challenged the intellectual rights to the Khachkar, cross-stone masterpiece of the Armenian Christian art, alleging that the Khachkar is nothing else but an example of Azeri art. Should that's been the case, one can only wonder what was the rationale behind the barbaric destruction just five years ago of one of the greatest-ever monuments of that art, the medieval Armenian cemetery in Jugha with thousands of Khachkars, and the construction in its place of a military firing-range. Incidentally, this became the present day epitome of a long-standing and persistent policy of total eradication of the Armenian cultural heritage in Nakhijevan, a region that enjoys the highest degree of autonomy within Azerbaijan.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Azerbaijan's attempts to extort unilateral concessions through the threat to use force are doomed to failure; what's more, these attempts continue to remain the greatest impediment for the compromise-based settlement of the conflict. Last week, it once again became clear to me that at this stage Azerbaijan has no interest in settling the Karabakh issue: Its sole purpose is to inflict as much damage on Armenia as possible.

Armenia categorically rejects the resumption of military hostilities in Nagorno Karabakh as an option. In case Azerbaijan resorts to military aggression, Armenia will have no other choice but to recognize the Nagorno Karabakh Republic de jure and to employ all its capabilities to ensure the security of the people of Artsakh.

Nagorno Karabakh has no future within Azerbaijan and, whatever the solution, it must emanate from the will of the people of Karabakh. This is the axis of the right of people to self-determination. Azerbaijan has neither legal, nor political, nor moral grounds for its claims over Nagorno Karabakh.

Distinguished Colleagues,

This OSCE Summit is of paramount importance for the future activities of the Organization. I would like to emphasize the great contribution of Kazakhstan - the country which holds the OSCE chairmanship, to the organization of this long-expected meeting, and thank the hosts for their warm hospitality.

Thank you.