

Human Dimension Seminar

“Rights of the Child: Children in Situations of Risk”

As delivered by Gevorg Terteryan, First Secretary of the Republic of Armenia to the Republic of Poland

Mr. Moderator

We thank the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship, the ODIHR and the Polish authorities for organization of this year’s Human Dimension Seminar on such a pertinent topic as Rights of Children at situations of risk. The annotated agenda incorporates number of situations of risk. However, it could be comprehensive, had it included among these situations also risk of displacement. In this regard we encourage the ODIHR and the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship to consider this year’s HDIM agenda, which provided good basis for inclusive discussions.

We are looking forward to the parallel consultations and discussions in working group for more detailed exchange of national policies and best practices in protection of human rights of child. For the time being I would like to refer to the issue of children at risk of displacement. This category encompasses first and foremost children living in the conflict areas, which are most affected by conflicts and escalations.

Systematic and gross violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of these people, use of force and economic coercion against them, lack of international protection are among main factors, not only increasing the risk of displacement of children, but also heavily affecting their right to life. In regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the last year April large scale military offensive of Azerbaijan against Artsakh took a heavy toll on the civilian population, including children. From the very beginning of the Azerbaijani offensive civilian infrastructures and civilian population became intentional and indiscriminate targets. Among the first civilian victims were the 12 year-old boy, Vaghinak Grigoryan who was killed in front of the school-building as a result of a Grad missile attack, and two other wounded school-children.

The large scale offensive led to forced displacement of thousands of people from borderline settlements, such as Talysh, including hundreds of children.

It should be mentioned that even before this aggression the children in the conflict area became targets of terror of Azerbaijani subversive groups. The killing of Smbat Tsakanyan, 17 years old teenager perpetrated by a criminal group of Hasan Hasanov, Dilgam Askarov and Shahbaz Guliev back to 2014 is a sad case in point.

The Armenian settlements along the state border are also subject of indiscriminate shelling. Last case was registered this summer in border village of Chinari, where the kindergarten, located in vicinity of Azerbaijani positions became target of heavy gunfire. Only thanks to professionalism of kindergarten teachers and assistance of military personnel, the children didn’t suffer casualties. In this regard we should commend also the ICRC, which had organized and equipped safe room in the kindergarten building just days before the incident.

Right to Reply to Azerbaijan

Any death of child on either side of the Line of Contact is a tragedy. We deeply regret that Azerbaijani Delegation doesn't share the same position and places even children of Armenian origin among enemies of the Azerbaijani state.

We resolutely deny any allegations of Azerbaijan in regard to the tragic death of two civilians along the Line of Contact between Artsakh and Azerbaijan. The incident was result of ceasefire violation by the Azerbaijani armed forces. The Armenian side number of times presented well-documented facts that Azerbaijani armed units are using civilian population as human shield by locating their positions inside or in close vicinity of settlements.

Thus, the real addressee of these allegations should be the Azerbaijani authorities, which reject implementation of agreements, reached in Vienna and St. Petersburg summits on creation of investigative mechanism into ceasefire violations and enhancing capacities of the PRCiO Office. These agreements were aimed first and foremost at consolidation of the ceasefire regime and avoiding casualties both among civilians and military. By rejecting to honour its own commitments the leadership of Azerbaijan assumes all responsibility for suffering of civilian population on all sides.