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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

**Statement
In response to the presentations
by the chairpersons of the three committees
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan,
Permanent Representative of Armenia
at the 1302nd meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

11 February 2021

Madame Chairperson,

I would like to thank Ambassadors Neil Bush, Florian Raunig and Anne-Kirsti Karlsen for presenting the annual work plans of the three committees. On a general note, let me stress that my delegation considers the planning process within the three dimensions of the OSCE extremely important. At the same time, we should, through regular reality checks and needs assessments, adjust our work plans in order to respond to the evolving challenges that we are facing in all three dimensions.

Madame Chairperson,

We are very much pleased that Ambassador Neil Bush will continue to lead the Security Committee. Last year, by the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Co-operation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime we have further streamlined our commitments on countering transnational organized crime. We recommitted ourselves to “maintaining the countering of transnational organized crime among the priorities of the OSCE by enhancing implementation of the respective international obligations and the OSCE’s existing commitments”. In this regard, we appreciate the inclusion of different aspects of preventing and combating transnational organized crime in the agenda of the Security Committee as a timely initiative to operationalize the Declaration and improve the implementation of our commitments.

We are pleased to note that the topic of combatting terrorism remains high on the agenda of the Security Committee. The extremely disturbing manifestations of terrorism that we witnessed last year in the OSCE region showed that the phenomenon

of foreign terrorist fighters poses a serious security threat to the OSCE region as well. The instrumentalization of foreign terrorist fighters through their financing, recruitment, transfer and deployment in the OSCE area of responsibility by the two OSCE participating States required immediate and concerted action, which unfortunately, did not happen. This situation revealed the deficiencies of our Organization both in terms of mechanisms at its disposal and structures. Moreover, the available toolbox, which is admittedly not very extensive to begin with, has not been fully and timely used in the face of imminent threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters. We strongly believe in the need to effectively address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, and our commitments in the area of counter-terrorism undertaken in Basel, Belgrade and Hamburg provide an excellent framework in this regard.

Madame Chairperson,

Let me also thank Ambassador Raunig for the inclusive and transparent consultation process on the annual work plan of the Economic and Environmental Committee. My delegation supports the work plan as proposed by the Chair of the Committee in consultation with the Swedish Chairmanship. We also find the distribution of the topics within the meetings and main events of Economic and Environmental dimension during the year as an interesting approach which hopefully can lead to substantive discussions and tangible outcomes. It goes without saying that the activities of the second dimension should be based on solidarity, transparency, equal and non-discriminatory partnership, mutual accountability and full respect for the interests of all participating States.

The untapped potential of the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension in building trust and confidence is undeniable. The OSCE Ministerial Council decision 8/17 on Promoting Economic Participation in the OSCE area reaffirms the importance of strengthening cooperation on economic activities as contributing to confidence and trust. Whereas, we fully endorse this concept, we should nonetheless equally acknowledge the role of the economic dimension as one of the pillars of the OSCE concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. And this Delegation is far from being convinced that the introduction of a non-existent commitment on peace-building within the second dimension is worth consideration, especially when proposed by a delegation whose actions are in stark contrast and violation of the concept of comprehensive and indivisible security and almost all principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

Madame Chairperson,

It is our firm belief that the implementation of extra-budgetary projects should not harm the interests of another participating State, should be in compliance with the OSCE commitments and last but not least, finding a right balance between the aims of this Organization and needs of benefiting participating states. This approach should be the

guiding principle for the OSCE Secretariat when considering involvement in any ExB project.

Having said that, my delegation reiterates that the extra-budgetary project on "Promoting Green Ports and Connectivity in the Caspian Sea Region" being implemented by the OCEEA is not inclusive, contains conflict-related elements and does not enjoy the support of all participating States. Therefore, we are not in a position to agree to the use of the knowledge and expertise of the OSCE Secretariat generated through our common contributions, namely the OSCE Unified Budget, in the project which from the very first day was clearly discriminatory in nature and aimed to further deepen the dividing lines in the region.

Madame Chairperson,

Let me also use this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Karlsen on assuming the duties of the Chair of the Human Dimension Committee. Needless to say, my delegation attaches particular importance to the Human Dimension as it plays a key role in the OSCE's concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. Many conflicts in the OSCE region are, in one way or another, the result of disrespect, suppression and violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, my delegation strongly advocates the application and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the OSCE area, without exception. In the same vein, we also believe that human rights mechanisms should have unhindered access throughout the whole OSCE area, leaving no one behind.

Madame Chairperson,

Three month after the cessation of hostilities unleashed against Artsakh, the continuous unacceptable situation with the Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives prompts my Delegation to request to consider holding a thematic discussion over this issue during the upcoming Human Dimension Committee meeting, with the view to discuss the compliance of the OSCE participating State with its commitments and obligations, including under the International Humanitarian Law.

We also note that the follow up to the MC.DEC/7/20 on the Prevention and eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment continues to remain on the agenda of the Committee.

Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the inclusion of such topics as promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, which are of paramount importance in view of alarming increase in hate speech and hate crimes in our neighbourhood, as well as issues of women's empowerment and media freedom in the annual work plan of the Human dimension committee. Discussion on social and economic rights in times of COVID-19 pandemic should also address the challenges faced by the people residing in conflict areas and affected by conflicts.

In closing, let me wish all three distinguished colleagues, Chairs of the three Committees, every success in their endeavors.

I thank you.