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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

## STATEMENT

**Azerbaijan's continued policy of aggression and violation of its obligations threatening further escalation of situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh as delivered by Ms. Lilit Grigoryan, Deputy Head of Mission at the 1429<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

*22 June 2023*

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Armenia raises this current issue to inform the Permanent Council and the participating States on Azerbaijan's continued policy of aggression directed at Nagorno-Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia and on the recent escalation of the situation on the ground.

On 13 June, the armed forces of Azerbaijan, once again resorted to the use of force, opened fire on the positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia and civilian objects located near the Yeraskh settlement of the Republic of Armenia.

We would like to emphasize that the Azerbaijani side deliberately opened fire in the direction of a metallurgical factory which is being built in Yeraskh with the involvement of foreign investments. Two Indian citizens, who were involved in the construction works of the factory, were injured as a result of Azerbaijani attack.

We have already talked about the pattern of Azerbaijani provocations and aggressions accompanied with the spread of disinformation. This attack perfectly fits into that pattern of actions and was preceded by Azerbaijan's false accusations against Armenia regarding the construction of the mentioned factory. Yet again, Azerbaijan weaponized ecological issues with fake narratives in an attempt to justify the use and threat of force against sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia. This time, Azerbaijan's Ecology Ministry claimed that the steel plant will harm the environmental safety of the region. We remember all too well the so-called "ecological movement" organized by the Government of Azerbaijan under the invented ecological pretexts with a sole purpose to block the Lachin corridor which currently has turned it into a total siege.

The Republic of Armenia has stated numerous times and we would like once again to emphasize that the construction of the factory fully complies with Armenia's international obligations in the field of environmental protection, and Azerbaijan's false and baseless accusations are simply aimed at hindering foreign investments in and obstructing the economic growth of the Republic of Armenia. By firing at the plant under construction, Azerbaijan also demonstrates overt disregard towards Armenia's internationally recognized borders, human rights and international law.

Mr. Chairperson,

It should be recalled that from 11 to 19 June, the Azerbaijani Defence Ministry, Foreign Ministry and media outlets generated a substantial volume of fake news claiming that the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia have violated the ceasefire regime in order to cover up multiple cases of their own violations of the ceasefire in different areas of the border. On 19 June the Azerbaijani media outlets announced about the military exercises involving the missile and artillery units which is aimed to conceal Azerbaijan's provocations conducted in the last days.

In this regard we would like to bring to the attention of the Permanent Council the chain of provocations systematically carried out in the direction of settlements of Nrnadzor, Shikahog, Khndzoresk, Kornidzor, Tegh, Knatsakh and Khoznavar of the Syunik province of Armenia and also to brief on the operational situation on the Armenian- Azerbaijani border.

According to the information received from the Ministry of Defence of Armenia heavy concentration of the Azerbaijani forces and military equipment has been registered in the mentioned directions. These activities are seen as preparations for active combat operations. Firing positions are being occupied by the cannon and self-propelled artillery and mortar batteries of Azerbaijan.

It is obvious that these actions of Azerbaijan are aimed at destabilising the situation and creating grounds for new large-scale aggressions. While Armenia prepares for the peace and for normalization of relations Azerbaijan prepares for war. These actions are also aimed at nullifying the efforts of the Republic of Armenia and the international partners directed at establishing peace, stability and security in the region.

The tactic of coercive foreign policy of Azerbaijan is aimed at extracting endless one-sided concessions and nullifying the efforts of the Republic of Armenia directed at establishing peace. It is clear that Armenia cannot take constructive steps alone, these steps must be reciprocal, and only in case of reciprocity can they be the basis of lasting peace.

Following the recent intensive round of negotiations and meetings held in Washington, Brussels, Moscow and Chisinau the momentum should be maintained to take decisive steps towards the signing of an agreement on normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

However, Azerbaijan consistently proves that in the negotiation processes with the Republic of Armenia in all directions it is guided only by the principle of imposing the desired solutions on the Republic of Armenia with the illegal use or threat of force, perceiving the weak response and permissiveness of the international community as a carte blanche for its new aggressions.

Mr. Chairperson,

We would also like to take this opportunity to bring once again to the attention of the participating States the situation in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and the Lachin Corridor

and to brief on the humanitarian crisis unfolded since the 15 June provocation of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Colleagues,

As you may know on 15 June a group of soldiers of the border guard service of Azerbaijan made an attempt to advance their positions and place an Azerbaijani flag on the sovereign territory of Armenia. The Azerbaijani provocation was prevented by the measures undertaken by the Armenian border guard.

After this provocation near the Hakari bridge, Azerbaijan has completely blocked all humanitarian movements along the Lachin Corridor in both directions. As a result, planned transportation of critically ill patients from Artsakh to Armenia through the mediation of the Russian Peacekeeping forces along the Stepanakert-Goris-Stepanakert route is cancelled. Movement of vehicles of Russian peacekeepers, heading to Goris to deliver humanitarian cargo to Artsakh, is also stopped.

For the eighth day now, since 15 June, Azerbaijan has completely blocked the delivery of all types of humanitarian supplies to Artsakh through the Lachin Corridor, food and medicine, carried out by the Russian peacekeeping forces and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), thereby deliberately depriving the 120,000 population of Artsakh, including women, children and the elderly, of the minimum means of subsistence. The situation is disastrous with Nagorno-Karabakh left alone with fast dwindling reserves of food, medicine and essential goods. The 120, 000 people of Artsakh are subjected to starvation by Azerbaijan which falsely claims that it will provide all rights and freedoms to these people. This clearly demonstrates that the real intentions of Azerbaijan are genocidal; unfortunately, there are no other indications to suggest the opposite.

These actions amounting to war-crime are taking place right before the eyes of the international community, including the OSCE. The deliberate obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian supplies for the basic needs of the people of Artsakh under siege, is considered a war crime under international law.

Instead of implementing the provisions of the Trilateral Statement of 9 November 2020 and adhering to the legally binding order of the International Court of Justice of 22 February 2023 Azerbaijan now resorted to actions that amount to a war crime.

So far we haven't heard any statement or voice of concern from the leadership of the OSCE be it the CiO, the Secretary General or the ODIHR which clearly indicates that because of this indifference this Organization is steadily heading to oblivion.

Trilateral Statement of 9 November 2020 established, inter alia the exclusive control of the Lachin Corridor by the Russian peacekeeping forces and the Corridor, was intended to connect Nagorno-Karabakh with the outside world and serve among others, as one of the guarantees of the security and well-being of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. For the past six months due to the arbitrary restrictions imposed by Azerbaijan the Corridor was used only for the passage of vehicles of the ICRC and the Russian peacekeeping forces.

We have been warning the Permanent Council about the intentions of Azerbaijan. By now, and in light of the current situation on the ground it should be beyond any doubt of for the international community that Azerbaijan's premeditated, carefully planned and executed efforts clearly demonstrate their intent to completely destroy the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) by inflicting on them conditions of life calculated to bring about its

physical destruction in whole or in part or to achieve its forced displacement which is a crime, punishable under international law.

Let me also draw the attention of participating States to the fact that today Azerbaijan is preparing grounds for a new aggression in Nagorno-Karabakh as it violates the ceasefire almost on a daily basis.

It is evident that Azerbaijan does not want to address the existing problems, but to move forward on with the principle according to which "there are no Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, there is no Nagorno-Karabakh problem". Such actions contradict the logic of the ongoing negotiations, including the approaches of the actors who carry a mediation mission for the settlement. There is no doubt that the recognition of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan cannot be interpreted as a license to implement ethnic cleansing against the population of Nagorno-Karabakh. It is also a signal to our partners to be more farsighted and responsible in their statements and actions which as we see may have far reaching deadly implications.

Under current circumstances it is imperative to address the rights and security issues of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh under the mechanism of internationally guaranteed dialogue and to send an international fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and the Lachin Corridor to assess the humanitarian situation on the ground, as well as to ensure unhindered humanitarian access to Nagorno-Karabakh for relevant UN bodies.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Armenia remains committed to the peace and will continue its efforts to work towards finding lasting resolution of the conflict and normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan in pursuit of its goal to bring peace and security to the South Caucasus.

Therefore, call on the OSCE and its participating States to take concrete steps to curb Azerbaijan's expansionist ambitions and its unacceptable policy of achieving its groundless, illogical and arbitrary demands through the use of force and the threat of force.

I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

I thank you.