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**DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**  
**ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

**Statement**

**In Response to the Address of H.E. Antonio Guterres, the UN High  
Commissioner for Refugees  
delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 984rd Meeting of the OSCE  
Permanent Council  
February 20, 2014**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like also to join the previous speakers in warmly welcoming Mr. Antonio Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and thank him for his interesting and informative address.

The issues of refugees continue to be high on the agenda of my Government. Armenia is committed to its relevant international commitments in the sphere of refugees.

We highly appreciate the high level of cooperation between the Government of Armenia and the UNHCR in addressing the issues of displacement in Armenia. Since 1988, when the first waves of refugees from Azerbaijan fled to Armenia, we implemented a number of programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of hundreds of thousands refugees, providing housing and guarantying their human rights and fundamental freedoms. We particularly value the humanitarian mission of the UNHCR in this regard. In close cooperation with your esteemed Office we were able to successfully implement integration programmes and diffuse the inherent tensions.

However, the housing of more than one thousand families experiencing two decades years of the protracted displacement remains on the agenda of the Government. We are grateful to the UNHCR and personally to you for assisting the Armenian Government in creating new opportunities here.

Nowadays, we face influx of more than 10 000 Syrian Armenians. The Government of Armenia has undertaken measures to facilitate their integration into our society and address their economic and social problems. We would welcome the support of the UNHCR in addressing the humanitarian needs of Syrian Armenians.

As in all other cases with displaced population, their human rights come first for the Armenian Government in seeking durable solutions.

We took note of development of the Protection Checklist for Internally Displaced Persons through joint cooperation between UNHCR, OSCE and the International Committee of Red Cross. As it was stipulated this cooperation is based on the Vilnius decision on conflict cycle which concentrates primarily on prevention of displacement. We understand that the elaborated checklist aims at ensuring availability of certain protection measures on the ground. In this sense we value the unimpeded access of the UNHCR to elsewhere in the OSCE region, including to the conflict zones.

In this regard we consider the cooperation between the OSCE and the UNHCR in ensuring humanitarian access very important one. Without fulfilling this basic requirement of protection, we will not be able to conduct inclusive dialogue on further enhancing the role of the OSCE in the issues of displacement.

Regrettably, the Azerbaijani authorities deny the humanitarian access of the UNHCR to the territory of Nagorno Karabakh and prevent any international assistance to the Armenian displaced population. These discriminatory practices of inflicting collective punishment on the population with a sheer political pretext shrank the humanitarian space and violate the OSCE commitments.

Speaking on durable solution for one group of displaced population and denying basic humanitarian needs of protection to another group goes against the very principles of reciprocity, human equality and fairness, concepts we need so much for constructive conflict resolution.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all success to Mr. Guterres in his important mission.

Thank you.