

REPORT OF THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE OSCE MINSK GROUP TO THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

After the completion of the election cycles in Armenia and Azerbaijan last year, the negotiation process started to move. The two Presidents accepted to meet for the first time in Geneva last December. Their second meeting took place in Warsaw in April.

The two Presidents accepted the Co-Chairs' proposal to set up a second level of dialogue. The objective of this second level was not to engage immediately in a new round of negotiations, but to fill the gap between the meetings of the two Presidents and to maintain the momentum of the process. The Presidents designated their Foreign Ministers as their personal representatives to this second level, and gave their consent for two meetings of the Ministers.

In the end, four meetings took place in the framework of what is called the "Prague process". A new method was agreed on: no agenda, no commitment, no negotiation, but a free discussion, on any issue proposed by Armenia, by Azerbaijan, or by the Co-Chairs. Thanks to the quality and the professionalism of the two Ministers, the discussions took place in a good atmosphere, and were constructive. They have achieved two main results:

- All the parameters of a future settlement have been explored methodically so that we have a clear idea of each party's positions;
- The core of the problem has been gradually identified, i.e., the basis on which real negotiations could start, necessarily involving compromises by each side, has been defined.

During their visit in the region in July, the Co-Chairs presented a set of possible scenarios to both Presidents:

- No agreement possible, which means maintaining the current fragile *status quo*;
- Agreement of the two parties to formally freeze *de facto* the current situation, which means postponing the definitive solution of the issue of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, while normalizing relations between the parties;
- Agreement on how the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh will be determined, with a progressive implementation of the provisions of such an agreement, including other elements of the settlement.

The Co-Chairs were not expecting an immediate answer from the Presidents on these scenarios. They were encouraged by the willingness of the Presidents to continue with the Prague process.

After the fourth Prague meeting, the Co-chairs' assessment, shared by the Ministers, was the following: the Prague process has fully lived up their common expectations, and, at

the same time, fulfilled its objectives. However, it is not possible to move forward further without clear guidance from the Presidents.

This is the message that the Co-Chairs passed to the Presidents when they met them in Astana in mid-September. They explained that they were ready to submit to their Ministers at a next Prague meeting a framework as the basis for a future negotiation. After a few hours of discussions between themselves and then with President Putin, the Presidents requested a “time for reflection” and committed themselves to make their answer known soon.

In the meantime, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office has sent his Special Envoy, former Bulgarian Prime-Minister Philip Dimitrov, to Baku and Yerevan to urge the Presidents to move forward and to remind them of the concern and the expectations of the OSCE.

The Co-Chairs have reminded the two Presidents, by a letter sent in late October, of their commitment to give their response to the Co-Chairs’ proposal for starting substantive negotiations on the basis developed through the Prague meetings.