



Warszawa, 20th September 2016

## **Self-Determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Commitments in the Human Dimension cannot be considered complete, unless due attention is given to one of the fundamental principles of international law - the right of peoples to self-determination. This principle is enshrined in a number of international instruments, including the two we are discussing today.

Obviously, it is impossible to ensure indivisible and equal security, focusing only on individual human rights and ignoring the collective rights of peoples. These two components of the Human Dimension are inextricably linked, as evidenced by the International Covenants on Human Rights. In some cases, the realisation of the right to self-determination is the only way to ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At the same time, open disregard and denial of people's right to self-determination, as well as attempts to suppress it are a threat to peace and security, as they are usually accompanied by mass human rights violations, violence and armed conflicts.

The history of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh is a striking example. 28 years ago the people of Nagorno-Karabakh declared its intention to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in response to decades of oppression and discrimination by Azerbaijan. It was a truly democratic movement, which embodied the struggle for civil rights, national dignity, economic equality, cultural distinctiveness, and education in the native language.

Despite the peaceful and legitimate nature of those demands, Azerbaijan from the very beginning refused from dialogue, resorting instead to threats and intimidation, and violent suppression of the free will of the Nagorno-Karabakh people. Mass killings of Armenians in Sumgait, Baku and other cities of Azerbaijan, followed by full-scale aggression against the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic became the response to the desire of the Nagorno-Karabakh people for freedom and secure future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

and today, 22 years after the establishment of ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan's refusal to recognise the right of the Karabakh people to self-determination is not only one of the major obstacles in the process of peaceful settlement of the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict, but also a factor that can destabilize the situation in the region, which is what happened in April 2016. On 2 April, Azerbaijan launched another aggression against the NKR, which was a direct consequence of the denial of the NKR people's right to self-determination and the right to live in their native land.



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Those events point to the need to focus more on compliance not only with individual, but also collective rights of peoples.

In conclusion, I would like to note that implementation by the people of Nagorno-Karabakh of their inalienable right to self-determination was not an end in itself, but a means to ensure the right to life and development, to realise the best of its potential, so that every citizen can equally enjoy all those rights, which are enshrined in fundamental international documents.

Thank you very much for your attention!