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**Statement by  
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the Republic of Armenia  
12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council**

**6-7 December 2004  
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Allow me first to express the appreciation of my Government to Bulgaria for its generous hosting of this 12th Ministerial Council. Our delegation would like equally to extend its appreciation for the Chairmanship-in-Office in 2004, both to Minister Solomon Passy and his team at the MFA in Sofia, and to the very able and dedicated Mission in Vienna, who had the burden and the challenge of dealing on a daily basis with 54 delegations.

We also wish to welcome Mongolia to this organization which is as inclusive and broad-reaching as any in today's world.

On the threshold of the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 10th year of the OSCE as an organization, we are compelled to look back, evaluate the present and reflect on the future.

We should all recognize how well the Helsinki Final Act has endured as a foundation of European security through three decades of momentous changes. The political landscape of Europe has been redrawn. The founding principles have demonstrated their continuing relevance and resilience. Yet, the political arrangements underpinning the political dynamics within the OSCE are in flux, and lead often to tensions or paralysis. Within the organization, there are several poles of power. While Armenia shares values and experiences with all, it cannot be subsumed as part of any. Instead, we can be allies, partners, neighbors, friends. The OSCE was conceived as an experiment in a pluralistic, multilateral, cooperative diplomacy to enshrine security and stability in a formerly divided Europe. The premise and the objectives are still valid and need to be continuously reinvented.

It is in this light that we see calls for reform. This issue has been subject to various interpretations, not all of them accurate or fair. We cannot on the one hand advocate flexibility, and on the other resist adaptation. The fairest systems are rule based, and should ensure the equal access of all to decision-making bodies. That is the essence of consensus, and that is what makes the OSCE effective. There is much less wrong with our structures than with our practices.

The Government of Armenia given the present context of affairs in the OSCE proposes and advocates vigorously "Pluralistic Equilibrium" as a new motto, a goal, an objective and an operational concept. In its essence it is not a new idea, it is simply a determination to revive an old ideal. We shall do all we can to achieve this goal, important to all of us and for the long-term relevance and effectiveness of the OSCE. We are particularly hopeful that the incoming Slovenian Chairmanship will spare no effort to realize this "Pluralistic equilibrium". We are confident they are up to the task, and more.

We have high hopes for the very useful work of the proposed panel of eminent persons to take an in-depth and broad view of OSCE at this moment facing structural challenges. However, we think the usefulness and the reliability of their work will be enhanced if they are eminent in their own right, as individuals of distinction, and not simply country-based appointees.

As to the many decisions we will adopt and endorse at this Sofia Ministerial, our support goes without saying. May I simply highlight some as particularly important to us. Terrorism and combating it with various tools – of course, this is an international priority. The 2004 Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality, the FSC package on better control of arms trafficking. And finally, I congratulate us all on our work to promote tolerance and fight discrimination without creating a hierarchy of victims of intolerance.

Mr. Chairman,

This is my 7<sup>th</sup> ministerial, and each year I hope that next year, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict will come off our agenda. This year we had, and I would say we still have, serious prospects for making that happen. As a result of four meetings between foreign ministers and a lengthy meeting between presidents in Astana, we had real reasons to assume that a resolution could be near. But, regrettably, Azerbaijan raised the issue of so-called Armenian settlements and took this matter to the UN. Thus, we have been faced with the reality that Armenia's willingness to keep the peace process alive has received a miscalculated and non-constructive response.

It was Azerbaijan's shortsighted, miscalculated responses of 15 years ago that brought us to today's situation. The historical, political, media records witness how peaceful Armenian claims for freedom and self-determination were met by armed aggression. Armenians defended themselves, just as international forces defended others in similar situations around the world. Each of Azerbaijan's red-flag issues: refugees, territories, settlements – are a result of the military conflict that they created.

Don't take my word for it. A group of Council of Europe parliamentarians, as neutral observers, were present in Nagorno Karabakh during the eruption of military activities. The following is part of what they cited in 1992.

“Recent Azeri offensives into Nagorno-Karabakh have resulted in entire villages being destroyed, with civilians massacred and children raped. The clear superiority of the Azeri forces in terms of manpower, arms and equipment, supplies of fuel and food, missile launching and aerial bombing capabilities compared with those of Nagorno-Karabakh means that it can only be a matter of weeks – if not sooner – before the enclave is overrun. Without any evidence of date, the fear of genocide and/or expulsion that would follow is entirely understandable.”

The result of Azerbaijan's military response and Armenians' fierce determination to survive was hundreds of thousands of refugees. Unlike my colleague, I will tell you that those refugees are on both sides. There are indeed more than half a million Azerbaijani refugees. But Mr. Chairman, there are nearly half a million Armenian refugees from distant cities like the Azerbaijani capital, as well as from the immediate conflict zone.

Those are the refugees – all waiting for a resolution.

As to settlements, we've repeatedly said there is no state settlements policy in either Armenia or Nagorno Karabakh. But there is in Azerbaijan. By presidential decree, the Azerbaijani State Committee on Refugees and IDPs was instructed to organize the settlement of refugees in the formerly completely-Armenian populated regions of Shahumian and Getashen, as well as Northern Martakert which is part of Nagorno

Karabakh and occupied by Azerbaijan. By the same decree the State Oil Fund allocated about \$18 million to resettle Azeris there. Yet the former Armenian residents of those regions are in and around the conflict zone, waiting for a resolution so that they can return to their homes.

A UN report just last month recommended that Azerbaijan take corrective measures to ensure that Armenians whose properties are illegally occupied by refugees and internally displaced persons be offered alternative accommodation.

This is the state of refugees and settlements. In other words, there is no new humanitarian crisis. There is the same difficult situation for both sides, which should not be exploited, but instead, should be addressed as part of the hard process before us. Despite these diversionary tactics, this process today still holds promise. We remain fully committed to the Minsk process as carried out by the three Co-Chairmen and we assume a similar and reciprocal commitment by Azerbaijan.

This conflict between the people of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan will be concluded when Azerbaijan shares our vision for a real peace. Our vision of a peaceful region is strategic. This vision should not be endangered by clever moves and countermoves. This will only succeed in handicapping or postponing serious negotiations.

Thank you.