



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council no. 1315 Vienna 25 May 2021

EU Statement in response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr Jeyhun Bayramov

The European Union welcomes the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr Jeyhun Bayramov, to the Permanent Council.

We welcome the consolidation of the ceasefire on the ground following the signature of the trilateral statement on 9 November 2020. We are encouraged by some positive results achieved on issues such as the repatriation of human remains and the provision of humanitarian assistance to populations severely affected by the conflict and call on the sides to step up their efforts to achieve further progress.

The European Union supports the call made by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group on 13 April to resume the high level political dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan under their auspices as soon as possible. We also strongly encourage the Parties to jointly agree on the various parameters allowing the long-term implementation of a set of stabilization, post-ceasefire rehabilitation and confidence-building measures. The EU and its member states welcome and support concrete OSCE projects aiming to contribute to the implementation of these measures. To defuse tensions and allow societies to make first steps towards normalisation, it is also crucially important to refrain from inflammatory public rhetoric and to avoid measures that could be seen as provocative.

We underline that it is essential that all participating States uphold the OSCE principles and commitments to which they have signed up, including those under the Vienna Document on transparency about military forces and activities.

The EU is following closely the worrying developments along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. We urge for the de-escalation of the situation, the withdrawal of military forces and engagement in negotiations on border delimitation and demarcation without delay, for the benefit of the security of the local populations. We welcome ongoing contacts at the technical level between the two sides.

The release of all prisoners of war and detainees is essential for building confidence and trust. We therefore welcomed the release of five Armenian detainees on 29 January and of three more on 4 May. All remaining detainees must be released without further delay. In this context, the EU wishes to recall that the European Court of Human Rights case law has clearly established that States Parties to the European Convention on Human Rights are under an obligation to comply with interim measures. We would like to use this opportunity to ask his Excellency Minister Bayramov when Azerbaijan intends to provide the outstanding information, as requested by the Court?

The European Union also expects both parties to cooperate on other important humanitarian issues. The recovery and repatriation of remains should continue. Urgent and decisive steps are needed on the exchange of information necessary for the conduct of humanitarian demining, including the sharing of any available maps of minefields to enable return to areas devastated by conflict and avoid casualties. We also underline the importance of ensuring full and unconditional access to Nagorno-Karabakh, in particular for representatives of international organizations, including international humanitarian organizations. We would therefore like to ask his Excellency if he believes that such access to the region will be provided soon?

The humanitarian situation in the region is further exacerbated by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The European Commission confirmed last week that it will contribute an additional €10 million in humanitarian aid to civilians affected by the recent hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. The EU is in close contact with humanitarian partners and other stakeholders on the ground to support the coordination of the humanitarian response and early recovery efforts. The EU assistance is part of the EU's efforts to strengthen resilience and peace building in the South Caucasus.

Following the cessation of hostilities, the EU calls on both Azerbaijan and Armenia to renew their efforts in finding a comprehensive and lasting settlement to this conflict. The EU reiterates its full support for the OSCE Minsk Group and its Co-Chairs in this regard, in pursuance of their mandate. We also reaffirm our support for the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office.

In this context, we recall that the timely adoption of the OSCE unified budget is essential to allow our Organization to make full use of its potential. We therefore strongly encourage a constructive and results-oriented approach by all participating States in order to have the UB 2021 adopted without further delay.

The EU remains fully committed to the efforts to achieve lasting peace and to foster prosperous developments in the region and stands ready to contribute to this, including through the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, in particular through support for confidence-building measures.

The EU values its partnership with Azerbaijan, including in the framework of the Eastern Partnership. The conclusion of the EU-Azerbaijan agreement is a political priority for us. We also look forward to the participation of President Ilham Aliyev at the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit.

Finally, we thank the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan for his address and wish him all the best in the future.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.