

**Statement by the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship 2017
at the 1130th (Special) Permanent Council Meeting
by the Chair of the Permanent Council
Ambassador Clemens Koja**

I regret that it was not possible to reach consensus in the Preparatory Committee today on the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. We remain committed to securing agreement on this mandate in the near future and we believe we are close to consensus.

I recall the statement made by the then German Chairmanship in the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council on 31 December 2016. As they stated then, in the course of discussions of the mandate of the Office in Yerevan, one delegation raised concerns that a planned activity of the Office in the field of humanitarian demining was not in line with the Mission's mandate. The German Chairmanship sent Special Representative Bächler to Yerevan to assess the character of the Mission's activities and, on the basis of his findings, came to the conclusion that the activity in question did not fall outside the Mission's mandate. We share this assessment.

We reiterate that issues relating to particular activities of field operations should be discussed in the framework of the budget negotiations and regret that this issue has delayed adoption of a decision on extension of the mandate of the Office in Yerevan. However, we and the previous Chairmanship have taken note of the concerns raised. We will therefore request the Office to abstain from work related to humanitarian demining and are grateful to Armenia, as host country, for its understanding. We are aware of some bilateral interest in continuing to assist Armenia in this area. We underline that the other activities of the Office will remain untouched.

We remain confident that the substance of the concerns raised has been addressed and we will continue discussions to resolve the remaining, essentially procedural questions.

We note the serious impact on the work of the Office in Yerevan and other field operations of the extended delay in reaching agreement, which threatens to have a wider detrimental impact on the functioning of the Organization. We call on all participating States to show a flexible and constructive approach in reaching consensus on the outstanding mandates and other urgent decisions awaiting agreement and invite all other participating States to extend their support to the extension of the Office in Yerevan, since this is an important matter for the whole Organization.

Corr.1*) redistribution due to change of distribution status, text remains unchanged.