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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement
In Response to the Address of H.E. Zbigniew Rau,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland
delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan,
at the 1324th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

July 15, 2021

Madam Chairperson,

The Delegation of Armenia welcomes H.E. Zbigniew Rau, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland to the Permanent Council and thanks him for outlining the priorities of the incoming Polish chairmanship of the OSCE.

Distinguished Minister,

Poland will take over the chairmanship of the OSCE at a time when the security threats in its area of responsibility have drastically deteriorated resulting in the huge deficit of trust and confidence among participating States, and the fundamental to the OSCE concept of comprehensive, cooperative and indivisible security is challenged.

The relevance and the standing of this Organization is largely dependent on the ability of the OSCE and its executive structures to promptly react and adequately respond to the challenges and violations of OSCE commitments.

Last year`s war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against (the Republic of) Artsakh with the direct and active involvement of Turkey and Turkish-backed foreign terrorist fighters, was a flagrant violation of key principles of the Helsinki Final Act of refraining from the threat or use of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The war has led, among other things, to numerous casualties, ethnic cleansing, destruction of cultural heritage and civilian infrastructure, and humanitarian disaster.

Distinguished Minister,

In the light of last year`s war and use of force against Artsakh and its people, the delegation of Armenia welcomes the intention of the incoming Polish Chairmanship to support the OSCE conflict resolution and mediation formats and processes in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We also note with satisfaction the special emphasis of the Polish Chairmanship on improving the situation of people affected by conflict.

Countering terrorism is another important area of our work, and the OSCE has developed a set of commitments and instruments, which should be effectively implemented and utilized. We firmly believe that fighting terrorism should not be a matter of political expediency or manipulation. The instrumentalization of foreign terrorist fighters and their deployment in the OSCE area, including for waging proxy wars, is absolutely unacceptable and should be resolutely and unequivocally condemned and denounced by the OSCE and its participating States. All OSCE participating States must strictly adhere to their commitments and obligations in combating the scourge of terrorism in good faith and without any hidden agenda. Armenia fully recognises the need to further enrich the OSCE`s counter-terrorism *acquis* without deviating from previous OSCE commitments, including those agreed in Basel, Belgrade and Hamburg, which, if implemented in good faith, provide a solid ground for effective and concerted efforts.

The Economic and Environmental Dimension is undoubtedly an important pillar of the OSCE`s concept of comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible security. The OSCE`s second dimension certainly has the potential to supplement the efforts towards building trust and confidence among participating States, provided that we are guided by shared commitments of solidarity, transparency, equal and non-discriminatory partnership, mutual accountability, and full respect for the interests of all OSCE participating States. In this regard, we note with appreciation that while focusing on post-pandemic recovery of our economies you will strive to ensure inclusivity.

We also welcome your intention to be guided by a human-centred perspective when it comes to the activities in the OSCE`s third dimension. Needless to say, my delegation attaches particular importance to the Human Dimension as it plays a fundamental role in the OSCE`s concept of comprehensive, cooperative and indivisible security. The underlying root causes of most conflicts in the OSCE area, one way or another, are related to the disrespect, suppression and violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, my delegation strongly advocates the application and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the OSCE area, without exception. In the same vein, we also believe that international human rights mechanisms should have unimpeded access throughout the OSCE area, without exception.

Distinguished Minister,

Now let me once again refer to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. And I would like to underline from the beginning that this conflict is not a territorial dispute as some delegations claim. It is about the right of people of Artsakh to live freely in their homeland, which once was given to Soviet Azerbaijan by a stroke of Stalin`s pen, to determine the political status of Artsakh and their future freely and without coercion.

Last year`s war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh, with the direct and active involvement of Turkey and Turkish-backed foreign terrorist fighters resulted in occupation of part of territories of Artsakh, the ethnic cleansing and war crimes, and once again proved that the Armenians of Artsakh cannot be under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan in any way or form.

Furthermore, the impunity for violating fundamental principles and commitments of the OSCE, of international law and international humanitarian law that Azerbaijan and its supporters continue to enjoy, creates an impression that settlement of conflicts and disputes by use of force is acceptable. If this behaviour and actions of Azerbaijan continue to be tolerated, then we should agree that all conflicts in the OSCE area could be resolved by use of force in conjunction with violations of all other OSCE principles and commitments.

This situation allows Azerbaijan and Turkey to insist that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is already resolved, even though the current situation is the result of the use of force, violations of international law, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

In this context, we took note of your statement about Nagorno Karabakh conflict and I have to say that we were unpleasantly surprised, since there was no single word about support to the Minsk Group Co-Chairs` efforts to achieve durable and political resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. So, I would like to hear your position on that, also taking into account that Polish Ambassador Kasprzyk serves as the Personal Representative of the CiO for almost three decades.

Your Excellency,

In an attempt to legitimize the results of its aggression and use of force against the people of Artsakh, Azerbaijan seeks to involve the OSCE structures and some participating States in the so-called "rehabilitation process", including by organizing visits of foreign diplomats to the occupied territories of Artsakh.

We consider such visits by foreign diplomats utterly unacceptable and we call on OSCE current and upcoming Chairmanship and other participating States to refrain from any actions that may justify the use of force and thereby undermine regional peace and security.

We reiterate that the conflict is not resolved. The trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 put an end to the armed hostilities and should be considered without prejudice to the final political comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As of today Azerbaijan, in violation of its commitment undertaken within the 9 November trilateral statement, refuses to return the Armenian POWs and other captives. Instead, it stages mock trials on trumped-up charges against Armenian POW and other detainees.

Moreover, Azerbaijan with its provocative actions and encroachment into the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia in the Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces since 12 May this year is trying to create new areas of tension thus further undermining regional peace and security.

I would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the recent developments along Armenia-Azerbaijan state border. On 14 July, the Azerbaijani armed forces undertook yet another provocative action in the vicinity of the Yeraskh settlement of Armenia, as a result of which private Samvel Alaverdyan, a contract serviceman of the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia, was fatally wounded by a sniper.

We strongly condemn these actions of Azerbaijan as well as the encroachment into the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia in violation of international law, which may further escalate the situation.

The comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be achieved through negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship, which remains the only internationally mandated mechanism to deal with the settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Such settlement which will bring long-awaited peace to the region, can be achieved only through the determination of the final legal status of Artsakh on the basis of the realisation of the right of its people to self-determination, de-occupation of the territories of Artsakh, the safe and dignified return to their homes of the recently displaced population of Artsakh, as well as the protection of the Armenian cultural and religious heritage in the territories currently under the control of Azerbaijan.

Distinguished Minister,

In closing, let me express confidence that the upcoming Polish Chairmanship will spare no effort to restore the relevance of the OSCE. Excellency, I wish you and your team here in Vienna and in Warsaw, all the success in your endeavours.

Thank you.