



**Statement by the Delegation of Azerbaijan at the
2008 OSCE Annual Security Review Conference
Working Session III**

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I would like to join the previous speakers and express our thanks to keynote speakers for their interesting and thought-provoking presentations. I wish to particularly mention the presentation by Ambassador Talvitie and thank him for his analysis of the current state of affairs around the settlement process related to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, where as he rightly noted the two armies are facing each other for many years.

Being an OSCE family, we have our common and positive achievements on many issues. However, we have not yet fully succeeded in eliminating the danger of conflicts between States. OSCE has an impressive toolbox and number of mechanisms, which are utilizable and applicable in dealing with conflict situations. Nevertheless, their state of functioning leaves some room for contemplation about whether their efficiency and responsiveness omits anything as desirable.

Definitely, a lot depends on us, the Members of the OSCE community. It is first and foremost our joint responsibility to respond to conflict situations with all possible means, including the use of existing OSCE tools and mechanisms. Also, we have to keep abreast of time and events by updating the existing ones and creating new mechanisms as it becomes necessary.

It has become indisputable that violators of international law and those supporting them directly or indirectly will not be brought to more flexibility without the consolidated and principled approach of the international community. Such approach should be free from any manifestations of double standards and selectivity. The international community should realize the obligation to apply universal norms and principles to all conflict settlement processes without any exceptions. Otherwise, the situation of impunity of and indulgence towards aggressors and their accomplices contributes to stagnation and undermining of settlement processes.

The fact that OSCE has not always been efficient in promoting respect for its own norms and principles among its participating States, especially with regard to sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, is also vividly seen in the

context of a lasting conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. It is not a secret that those 16 years of OSCE mediation in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not brought any progress in terms of achieving a peaceful settlement. And who knows for how many years further on we will count while talking about OSCE role in resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, if the Organization does not revise its approach to dealing with this conflict so that to distinguish between a *culprit* and a *victim*.

Since the beginning of the so-called “Prague Process”, the position of my country on the peaceful settlement of the conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been expressed by our delegation on numerous occasions.

In the process of peaceful settlement of the conflict, the Republic of Azerbaijan proceeds from the values of good neighborliness, restoration of inter-communal links and reintegration of the conflict-affected territories back into the political and economic system of Azerbaijan, with due account of European experience. Our position is based on the norms and principles of international law and corresponds to the values of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

This position of Azerbaijan has also been supported by the recent UN General Assembly resolution 62/243 of March 14, which reaffirms the continued respect and support of the Assembly for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders.

The resolution also demands the withdrawal of Armenian troops from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan, underlines the inalienable right of the population expelled from the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan to return to their homes, and stresses the necessity of creating appropriate conditions for the return, including the comprehensive rehabilitation of the conflict-affected territories. Return of Azerbaijani community is indicated to be the basic condition for further definition of status of the region. The General Assembly also expresses its support to the mediation efforts of the Minsk Group of the OSCE, which should be based on the respect for norms and principles of international law.

Mr. Chairman,

In the context of the above said, let me emphasize that according to international law, realization of the right for self-determination shall be carried out in accordance with the principle of territorial integrity and should not go in breach of this fundamental principle. Having referred to international law,

allow me once again to reiterate that Azerbaijan sees the principle of territorial integrity as the only basis of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

As the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation mentioned in his statement the recent meeting between Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Saint-Petersburg, let me emphasize that this meeting was useful for us from the point of possibility to obtain information about the real intentions of the newly elected Armenian President.

The President of Azerbaijan once more very explicitly stressed the position of the Azerbaijani side that the settlement can be achieved only on the basis of respect to territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the set of proposals presented by the Co-Chairs last December should be amended according to this well-known position of Azerbaijan.

Thus, the following issues should be properly reflected in the Co-Chairs paper:

- Restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan;
- Withdrawal of the Armenian military forces and return of currently occupied territories under the control of Azerbaijan without any delay;
- Equal and secured access for both of the parties to the road connection through the Lachin district;
- Guaranteed return of the Azerbaijani population to all conflict affected Azerbaijani territories, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Referring to the statement made by the delegation of Armenia, I wish to stress that it is curious to hear about minorities from the representative of the country, which has become a unique monoethnic state as a result of its deliberate and consistent policy of ethnic cleansing towards minorities residing in what is at present known as Armenia for centuries, as well as to listen to his comments about provisions of international law, which are being brutally violated by his country almost in the course of two decades.

In conclusion, returning back to the general subject of this session, let us express our hope that the OSCE will revitalise and strengthen its role as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter in dealing with conflict situations and will redouble its efforts in order to promote negotiated solutions to these conflicts based on principles of international law, particularly, those enshrined in the UN Charter, a Helsinki Final Act as well as other OSCE documents.

Thank you.