



ԵԱՀԿ ՌԻՄ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄՇԱԿԱՆ ՆԵՐԿԱՅԱՑՈՒՑՉՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement
in response to the address by the
Secretary General of the Council of Europe
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1377th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

09 June 2022

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes Secretary General Pejčinović Burić back to the Permanent Council and thanks for her address.

Madame Secretary General,

Our regular exchanges with you here, at the OSCE Permanent Council, constitute an important component of the established co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. It is Armenia`s strong belief that the *basic tenet* of our co-operation should be the idea of an inextricable link between security and human rights. In this context, Armenia has always advocated for closer ties and co-operation between our two Organizations based on complementarity of activities and their comparative advantages.

Needless to say, the identified four areas of co-operation between our Organisations are extremely important. However, we must also admit that almost two decades of co-operation have not been marked by any tangible achievements or improvement in these areas, primarily due to the formal basis and arrangement.

Dear colleagues,

Back in 1949, after WWII that ravaged Europe, the Founding Fathers of the Council of Europe were convinced that the sustained peace and stability on the European continent should be pursued through the promotion and protection of democratic values, human rights and the rule of law and restore and preserve peace

on a divided continent. To this end, the Council of Europe has developed a large body of legally binding conventions and treaties and has introduced a robust monitoring of implementation of the obligations and commitments by member states.

In this vein, we recall that the Council of Europe has a specific duty also in the context of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict to follow-up the accession commitments of Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

We note with regret that the absence of a robust reaction and clear assessment by the Council of Europe in response to the war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno Karabakh, as well as subsequent violations by Azerbaijan of its international obligations, in particular non-compliance with or disregard for the decisions by the European Court of Human Rights, has tarnished the image and the standing of the Organization as a staunch defender of human rights and, more importantly, the universal application of human rights as a legally binding principle on which the Council of Europe was founded.

Azerbaijan's illegal actions should have triggered an adequate response, especially given that in other similar cases, the response of the Council of Europe was swift and decisive.

Due to the lack of a robust and strong response from the international community, Azerbaijan continues to violate international law with impunity. Almost two years after the signing of the trilateral ceasefire statement of 9 November 2020, Azerbaijan continues the illegal detention of dozens of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians, in total disregard of its international obligations. It also continues to sentence Armenian POWs to lengthy prison terms on bogus charges based on confessions obtained under duress and torture. The number of Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages, confirmed by the Azerbaijani authorities, currently stands at 38. The fate of another 119 prisoners of war and civilian captives is still unknown, although the capture of dozens of them by Azerbaijani forces is confirmed by video and/or other evidence.

Armenian prisoners of war are deprived of their basic right to a fair trial. This is a fairly justified assumption considering the situation of justice and absence of independence of judiciary in Azerbaijan. Systemic cases of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment are another cause for grave concern.

Therefore, we encourage you to call on Azerbaijan to immediately and unconditionally release all Armenian prisoners of war and civilians still detained in Azerbaijan in line with its commitments under the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 and international humanitarian law.

Azerbaijan also continues the deliberate and systematic destruction of the Armenian cultural heritage in the territories that have come under its control. There are many disturbing reports coming these days, and we once again draw the attention of the Council of Europe to the policy of vandalism and misappropriation of Armenian cultural heritage. In this regard, the resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the “Humanitarian consequences of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan/Nagorno-Karabakh conflict” can serve as a point of reference and a basis for the action by the Council of Europe.

Madame Secretary General,

We took note of the information regarding the meeting between Armenian and Azerbaijani civil society representatives. On a general note, in order to understand the real impact of engagement with civil society representatives, it is necessary to keep in mind the environment in which they work. This will help understand their real place and role in both societies.

With regard to confidence-building measures, it is important to underline that over the decades Armenia has not only supported various confidence-building initiatives, but has also participated in such initiatives in a good faith. However, such meetings have no value if they are followed by flagrant violations of the ceasefire and provocations with human casualties. Just a few days after the meeting in Venice, the Azerbaijani armed forces opened fire and wounded Armenian serviceman Gor Gyulsaryan. Two days later, on 28 May, another Armenian serviceman, Davit Vardanyan was killed by sniper fire. These unprovoked actions clearly indicate that Azerbaijan is using such initiatives as a smokescreen to cover up its malicious intentions in the eyes of the international community.

If Azerbaijan is sincerely interested in peace, then, first of all, it must reject and denounce the use of force as a means of settling disputes, as required by international law. Another necessary condition is Azerbaijan’s renunciation of its territorial claims to the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia and genuine engagement in negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Madame Secretary General,

I hope that your upcoming visit to the region and meetings there will contribute to addressing these pressing humanitarian issues.

In closing, Madame Secretary General, let me reiterate Armenia’s full support for your efforts in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the entire territory of the Council of Europe and wish you a productive visit to Armenia.

Thank you.