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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

**STATEMENT**

**In Response to the Director of ODIHR, Ms. Ingibjörg Gísladóttir**

**as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia at the 1267th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

**14 May 2020**

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank Director Ingibjörg Gísladóttir for her report and thoughts on the overall situation in the OSCE area in the times of COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019 we have quite extensive cooperation between Armenia and the ODIHR. At the request of the Armenian authorities, the ODIHR provided a number of expert opinions on issues like equality before the law and political party legislation, helped develop national migrant integration strategy, participated in a number of conferences and workshops, assisted in the implementation of ongoing and new projects. We very much value the established effective cooperation and are seeking even more enhanced collaboration with you, Madame Director, and with your team.

Let me also express my Delegation`s support to the ODIHR`s priorities as highlighted in the Programme Outline 2021. We positively note that among other activities the ODIHR intends to enhance effective outreach and communication in support of human dimension commitments. At the same time, we believe that the ODIHR expertise should be provided not only upon the requests from participating States, but due attention should be paid to the needs of people residing in conflict areas. This is especially true today, since among other challenges they are effectively deprived of access to the human rights mechanisms as well as humanitarian assistance which many participating States are benefiting from in this time of pandemic.

Madame Director,

It is a well-known fact that in crises situations, we usually witness exacerbation of situation in terms of human rights abuses and suppressions, obstructions to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, new motivations for old phenomena of stereotyping,

hatred, intolerance, discrimination and xenophobia. Thus, in such trying times the role of human rights institutions and mechanisms become much more significant and, in this context, I would like to extend Armenia`s support to the efforts and activities of the ODIHR.

It is also true that in certain states of the OSCE recurring blatant violations of human rights are multiplied under the pretext of measures taken to stop the spread of disease. Some are seizing the momentum to further tighten the restrictive measures, silencing the critical voices and many other freedoms. Such cases need special attention and reflection.

Madame Director,

Armenia attaches great importance to the Human dimension implementation meetings and using this opportunity, I would like to once again reiterate our long-standing position regarding the inclusive nature of the HDIM. This Delegation highlighted on numerous occasions the necessity to ensure the active and unrestricted participation in HDIM`s work of NGOs and representatives of civil society including those coming from conflict affected areas. We hope that during this year`s HDIM we will have the opportunity to address the issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms of people residing in conflict affected areas. This will help streamline the substantial discussions and will help prevent the misuse of this important platform by those who try to cover up poor human rights records by invoking conflict related narratives. We note with satisfaction that the ODIHR will continue to seek ways of improving the organizational aspect of HDIMs meetings, so that they can truly serve as a platform for discussing the implementation of the OSCE human dimension commitments.

Another challenge that we have been facing at almost every HDIM, at least in the last several years, is the participation of so-called GONGO`s and attempts by some participating States to hijack discussions and use this platform for disseminating state propelled propaganda.

In conclusion, Madame Director, let me once again express my appreciation for the established effective cooperation between the ODIHR and the Armenian authorities and thank you for your consistent engagement and attention to the issues of mutual interest. I assure you that you can always count on the support of my Delegation.

I thank you.