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A D D R E S S

**by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
at the 17th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council**

Athens, 2 December 2009

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by extending my sincere appreciation to H.E. Mr. George Papandreou and all members of the OSCE Greek Chairmanship for excellent organization of this Ministerial Council meeting and successful conduct of the leadership of this Organization throughout the whole year. I would also like to cordially welcome our distinguished Kazakh colleague, my good friend Minister Kanat Saudabayev as the incoming OSCE Chairman-in-Office, and wish him every success in fulfilling this important and responsible task.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Next year will mark the 35th anniversary of the founding document of the OSCE – the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, a benchmark document and the point of departure for all our subsequent OSCE commitments. In this regard, we welcome the intention of the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship to convene after ten years the meeting of Heads of States. Azerbaijan strongly believes that this meeting will provide a great opportunity for all participating States to reaffirm their strong commitment to the Principles of the Helsinki Decalogue.

We would like to highly commend the Greek Chairmanship for initiating a very important project, which took start at the informal meeting of the OSCE Foreign Ministers in the island of Corfu. The ensuing “Corfu process” in the form of informal discussions at the level of Ambassadors in Vienna has provided an important and needed platform for frank and open-minded exchange of views on the issues of the OSCE’s agenda in all its dimensions. Though understanding that

the continuous dialogue must not be constrained by artificial timeframe, hopefully the process will not stagnate and will evolve into process of restoration of trust and confidence among all participating States.

However, addressing the problems must not be confined only to discussing them. Concrete actions and political will are the best guarantees of success. Regardless of the capacity of the OSCE, quantity and quality of its *acquis* and mechanisms, the effectiveness of the Organization very much depends on the behavior and real willingness of its participating States. Therefore, the OSCE must turn into action-oriented Organization and its participating States should open a new page by reaffirming their adherence to the letter and spirit of the 1975 Helsinki principles and act in their full conformity.

Mr. Chairman,

The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict still remains a major source of instability and impediment to the economic development and integration of the entire region of the South Caucasus into the European and Euro-Atlantic architecture. As a result of this conflict almost 20% of the territory of Azerbaijan has been still occupied by Armenia, around 1 million ethnically cleansed Azerbaijani population has become internally displaced and refugees, thousands of Azerbaijani historical-cultural heritage items on the occupied territories devastated and looted.

This year was remarkable in terms of the intensiveness of the meetings between the Presidents of the both sides, and the detailed and in-depth discussions of the most important yet unresolved issues. I should admit that there are the positive

dynamics through the latest talks and both sides together with the Minsk Group Co-chairs agreed to intensify negotiations. Azerbaijan maintains a position of constructiveness and stands for peaceful and cooperative coexistence of Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. This will create basis for normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Providing self-governance for Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan will be a just and durable solution, as well as it can dramatically reduce tensions and challenges for peace and stability in the region.

We in Azerbaijan strongly believe that withdrawal of Armenian troops in a fixed time framework from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan will open a tremendous opportunity for the region, providing different environment of predictability, development and benefit for everyone and for the entire region. This is the core of the issue.

Thank you.