

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

WORKING SESSION 17:

Fundamental Freedoms II, including:

Freedom of movement, Migrant workers and the integration of legal migrants

As delivered by Mr. Davit Knyazyan, Head of the OSCE and Conventional Arms Control Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

Fundamental freedoms II, including:

Ms. Moderator,

We would like to thank the distinguished introducer for his informative presentation.

We would like to stress the key role of the OSCE commitments in the sphere of freedom of movement in facilitating people to people contacts, building confidence and trust and promoting connectivity in the OSCE area. It is an important track to reach our objective of common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

Armenian authorities continue facilitation of visa for people, wishing to travel to Armenia. Citizens of 47 OSCE participating States are exempt from entry visas to travel to Armenia on unilateral or reciprocal basis.

As a landlocked country with 80% of borders in blockade Armenia is one of the most interested participating States in promoting freedom of movement. Enjoyment of the right of the freedom of movement requires the existence of open and secure borders between participating states on which we have agreed in Ljubljana. We understand that conflicts can have certain security bearing on the implementation of this commitment. But it is absolutely unacceptable when this commitment is violated by participating state who is not party to the conflict. We regret that we will not be able to discuss this issue here in the absence of participating state who left the HDIM.

Another pressing issue, which we would like to raise is continuous denial of entrance to Azerbaijan for not only Armenian citizens, but any persons, suspected to be of Armenian origin, regardless their nationality. This is the only such case in the whole OSCE area, when a participating State officially implies discriminatory practices on the basis of ethnicity in the field of freedom of movement. The Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region, elaborated by ODIHR has reflected this situation. Certain other participating states raised their strong concern with regard to this illegal practice. Such a policy of prevention any people-to-people contacts deepens the gap between our societies and serves as a major obstacle for resolution of long-standing disputes.

Mr. Marat Ueldanov, Russian citizen of Armenian origin, continues to remain in detention since already more than year under pretext of drug charges. Such cases have to do not only with violations of commitments in the freedom of movement, but also clearly indicate the alarming situation in the sphere of tolerance and non-discrimination in Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani authorities are also attempting to impose illegal restrictions on freedom of movement and prevent access of international organizations, journalists, NGOs beyond their jurisdiction.

Mr. Moderator,

In light of the above, we would like to make the following recommendations:

- Participating States should comply with their commitment to facilitate free and secure movement of persons through ensuring open and secure borders.
- Participating States should remove the illegal restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement of all individuals residing in the conflict affected areas and ensure humanitarian access of international organizations, including OSCE to those areas.
- Participating States should ensure freedom of movement for representatives of governmental bodies, NGOs and international actors, including OSCE. Any restrictions on freedom of movement should be in line with international standards.

Thank You.

### **Right to Reply to Azerbaijan**

Ms. Moderator,

We would like to again invite attention of Delegation of Azerbaijan that its violation of freedom of movement is documented by the OSCE ODIHR and also reflected in the statements of certain other participating States.

Second, Delegation of Azerbaijan named a handful of persons, who had visited Azerbaijan and referred to some sport events, which presents merely a window-dressing exercise and confirms our concerns.

Thank you.