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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

Statement

**On the Large-Scale Military Offensive of Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh
delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1094th Special Meeting of the
OSCE Permanent Council
April 5, 2016**

Mr. Chairman,

First we would like to thank the OSCE Chairperson of the Permanent Council for convening the special session. We are also grateful to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair, Ambassador James Warlick and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson in Office Ambassador Kasprzyk for appearing in the Permanent Council on the issue which requires urgent attention of the OSCE and its participating states.

Before I will go directly to the current situation on the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, I would like to thank for the words of sympathy addressed to the families of victims of the ongoing escalation in the region.

We are convinced that this escalation is meaningless and the peoples of the region will not benefit from the large-scale military confrontation.

The large scale military actions began at the night of April 1 to April 2. Azerbaijani armed forces unleashed large scale offensive along the line of contact. The use of force on which Azerbaijan was making constant threats took place.

The defense installations of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army, civilian infrastructure, settlements came under heavy bombardment by artillery, tanks, armored vehicles, multiple rocket launchers, and air force, along the Line of Contact and deep inside the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The units of the Azerbaijani army intruded Nagorno-Karabakh in several directions. The use of deadly offensive weapons included 122 mm caliber multiple launch rocket system "Grad", heavy multiple rocket launcher "Smerch", heavy flamethrower system TOS-1, 152 mm caliber howitzers and various-caliber mortars.

The first and decisive strike on which Azerbaijani armed forces counted for successful commencement of their military action was effectively resisted by the NK Defence Army. Azerbaijan lost significant amount of tanks, armored vehicles, number of combat, attack and other types of drones, 2 attack helicopters, as well as hundreds of troops.

These figures are constantly updating but it is certain that Azerbaijan already paid a heavy price for its military adventurism and misleading reports on putative military gains will not be able to mitigate it.

The NK Defence army endured casualties as well. So far 20 servicemen were killed, 72 wounded. The fate of 26 persons is unknown. There are number of civilian casualties: youngest of which is 12 years old boy and eldest is 92 years old woman.

We are not surprised that Azerbaijan tries to cover up its large scale military offensive by putting forward false allegations on ceasefire violations emanating from the NK side.

After all, history does not know any aggressor who will not blame the other side for unleashing its military campaign. It is obvious that neither Armenia, nor Nagorno-Karabakh have any reason, necessity, purpose to escalate the situation. Whereas, there are multiple reasons for Azerbaijan to do that, to name only a few: to divert the international attention from the criticism of its dire human rights situation, to avoid public anger in Azerbaijan related to the huge inflation and socio-economic problems due to the drastic cut in oil prices, to derail the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process trying to gain some advantages through the blackmail– negotiate with guns.

However, even in the Azerbaijani version there is an implicit recognition that the current military escalation is a result of their deliberate actions. Here, first of all I mean the references of Azerbaijani side which has been also circulated by the Azerbaijani delegation here in the OSCE on so called “liberation” of settlements and strategic positions. Azerbaijani side went even further by declaring that its forces are building new defense lines and consolidating their gains.

The attempt to conquer the territory and military positions differentiate these ceasefire violations from the previous ones. Another important feature of this escalation that makes it unprecedented is systematic and deliberate targeting of the civilian objects and population with an apparent attempt to terrorize people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why Azerbaijani armed forces would bombard schools and kill and injure schoolchildren or why Azerbaijani special forces would torture, kill and mutilate three elderly persons in the NK borderline village Talish, one of them 92 years old woman. The appalling photos of these heinous crimes appeared in the media. These atrocities recalled the memories of massacres committed at the wake of the conflict, when hundreds of Armenians were killed and mutilated in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad and elsewhere in Azerbaijan. Not much has been changed in Azerbaijan since then, except that Azerbaijani armed forces learnt ISIL style executions and taking pictures with chopped heads, which was put forward online to boost military spirit.

The deliberate shelling of border line settlements particularly Martakert town of Nagorno-Karabakh by heavy artillery and multiple rocket systems is not even hidden by Azerbaijani side who made a threat to bombard even the NK capital city Stepanakert.

These actions cannot be justified by military necessity and some of them constitute war crimes. It is clear what will happen to the inhabitants of NK if Azerbaijani troops would be able to capture them. Therefore, the necessity of the implementation of the right to self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh cannot be put under doubt since the very existence of people is at stake. Under these circumstances the Republic of Armenia as a party to the trilateral ceasefire agreement of 1994 will take necessary actions. People of Nagorno-Karabakh have the right to self-defence and Armenia as a guarantor of their physical security will stand by them. The President of Armenia instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia to prepare the draft treaty on the mutual military assistance to be signed by the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Armenia appreciates the unequivocal condemnation of ceasefire violations pronounced by various representatives of international community. However, non-specified and generic condemnation will not be sufficient to restrain the party who unleashed this large scale military offensive. Therefore it is essential to identify and hold accountable Azerbaijan who undermines the ceasefire and thus regional peace and security.

My delegation constantly raised the issue of ceasefire violations by Azerbaijan at the level of the Permanent Council since 2014. On numerous occasions Armenia agreed with the proposals of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to establish investigative mechanism into possible ceasefire violations while Azerbaijan rejected all proposals of international mediators on confidence building measures aimed at the consolidation of ceasefire. Armenia called on strengthening the capacities of the Office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office whose field officers monitor ceasefire regime, while Azerbaijan attempted to limit their permanent presence in the conflict zone. The reason why is more than evident today. Hence all efforts of Azerbaijan were aimed at limiting the international presence and preparing conducive conditions for its new military aggression against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In line with its policy of preparation to major hostilities, Azerbaijan dismissed all proposals for political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict put forward by the international mediators-the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and their respective countries. At the highest level Azerbaijan mocked the peace process and its agreed format and finally earlier this year Azerbaijan refused to meet with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Along this policy of undermining the peace process and disregarding the calls of various representatives of international community to uphold its commitment to peaceful resolution of the conflict, Azerbaijan tried to get support of Turkey known for its hostile attitude towards Armenians. The provocative rhetoric of Turkish high level authorities before and after the recent escalation along with consistent support provided to the Azerbaijan armed forces are nothing less than open encouragement to commit new

crimes against the Armenian people. Armenia has constantly raised the threats that kinship solidarity approaches pose to the indivisible and universal security in the OSCE area and this recent events more than validated our concerns.

Yesterday the President of Armenia in an address delivered at the meeting with the Ambassadors of the OSCE participating states accredited to Yerevan clearly communicated the position of Armenia on overcoming the current escalation.

First, the adherence to the 1994 trilateral ceasefire agreement signed between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh should be enforced, the military actions should be halted and the troops should return to the positions and installations which they held on April 1.

Second, investigation mechanism into the ceasefire violations should be urgently established. The capacities and activities of the PRCiO should be significantly strengthened and extended to include additional field officers to monitor the ceasefire. The Nagorno-Karabakh authorities are signatory of 1994 ceasefire agreement and the direct contacts should be re-established with them by all parties to the conflict.

No any arrangement will be supported by the Armenian side, which will try to create conditions for continued and incremental ceasefire violations, something that Azerbaijan tried to achieve by proclaiming a deceptive unilateral ceasefire. We and international community cannot count on good will of the country which has unleashed this attack. Our point of reference cannot be a good faith of Azerbaijan which had never existed, but international obligations of 1994 ceasefire verified and supervised by the relevant OSCE actors.

Last but not least we have noticed that the name of the title of the current Special PC meeting has been changed from the biweekly version of the agenda and the name of Nagorno-Karabakh was skipped. We understand that one participating state fights against the existence of this very name both on the ground by military force and here in Vienna through blackmailing. We don't think that readiness of the Chairmanship to accommodate wishes of that participating state can be an indicator of consistent and transparent stance.

We took note of the statement put forward by number of the OSCE participating states which was quoted here by distinguished Ambassador Pohl. We will study the statement, but as initial comment let me highlight one point. We don't think that this statement can be defined as the statement of the Minsk Group since Armenia which is the member of the Minsk Group is not presented there. Therefore title of the statement should be rectified.

Thank You.