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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 761st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh

Madam Chairperson,

Fifteen years have elapsed since the entry into force on 12 May 1994 of the ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. While that agreement put an end to the hostilities, the reports by Ambassador Kasprzyk, Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, unfortunately remind us that the situation on the ground remains volatile and that armed incidents continue to claim victims, including civilians, on both sides of the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh. These incidents constitute unacceptable violations of the 1994 ceasefire agreement.

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the implementation of this agreement, the European Union would like therefore to solemnly renew its call for strict respect of the ceasefire modalities and the additional measures agreed in 1995. It also urges the parties to respect in good faith their commitments not to resort to force. Furthermore, as it already stated in the Permanent Council on 5 March 2009, the European Union lends its full support to the recommendation made by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group at the Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki concerning the development of confidence-building measures on the ground. In this regard, we regard the unconditional withdrawal of the long-range precision weapons, which are responsible for many civilian and military victims, as being particularly important.

Madam Chairperson,

The European Union welcomes the regular meetings between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, which attest to the vitality of the negotiation process and the constructive nature of the relations that have been established between them. The meeting between President Aliyev and President Sargsyan on 7 May, which took place in Prague on the sidelines of the summit launching the Eastern Partnership that we have just spoken about, is the fourth such meeting in less than a year. It follows the meetings in St. Petersburg in June 2008, in Moscow in November 2008 and in Zurich in January 2009, which took place in an open and constructive climate.

The mediation on the part of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group to reach a fair and lasting solution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh was confirmed at the highest level on this occasion. The European Union reaffirms its complete confidence in the French, Russian

and American Co-Chairmen to make progress in all fairness in the search for a political settlement of the conflict, which is vital for the future and stability of the entire region.

While it welcomes the willingness reiterated once again in Prague by the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents to progress with and intensify the dialogue, the European Union urges the parties to finalize as soon as possible the basic principles that were submitted to them at the Ministerial Council in Madrid some 18 months ago. We believe that it is now time to open up a new phase in the negotiations.

As it has already underscored on several occasions, the European Union recalls that the efforts of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group can be successful only if the parties take responsibility and agree to the necessary compromises. It therefore urges them to be realistic and show the political will that is indispensable for the conclusion of a balanced and mutually acceptable conclusion.

Lastly, the European Union reiterates its determination to work closely with the parties to promote stability and prosperity and to consolidate democracy and the rule of law in the region, and to strengthen its co-operative relations with the parties within the framework of the Eastern Partnership that has just been launched in Prague.

The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, and the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.