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

Statement
on the Situation in and around Nagorno Karabakh
at the 550th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
April 14, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

If you allow me, I will address all three Statements together: what the Russian Federation conveyed as the message of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, what my distinguished Azerbaijani colleague tried to do in answering our Statement of last week PC using their right of reply, and what the distinguished Ambassador of Luxemburg said on behalf of the European Union. They are very intimately related.

I feel a little sorry that something I said in September last year, 2004, was something rather prescient. I finished my Statement then by saying: “These occasional outbursts, this punching match, I wish they would come to an end. I should be happy if before I leave I don’t have to do another one of these, but I am afraid I may be disappointed. While we are reluctant to initiate these exchanges, we feel obliged to respond to them.”

I think it was prescient and it is true. Just very simple couple of points. What was the purpose of our Statement last week? We really do not believe that this war existing between us, though not active right now can be resolved by scoring propaganda points at the OSCE; or, for that matter, at the Council of Europe, or at the UN. If it were a propaganda match, as some people wish it were, then it would assume that the conflict is at the level of words here rather than of facts on the ground.

We do not believe that is the case and we do not intend to act as if it were. It is not a “war” we can win, nor I must add, our neighbors can win. There are so many ways of looking at the situation that “victimology” seems to be a convenient way of describing everybody’s position.

Let me first refer to the Statement of the Co-Chairs. We couldn’t agree more with the Statement from the Co-Chairs that to prepare their populations for a balanced, negotiated agreement it will require compromise on both sides. We couldn’t agree more. We get disappointed, agitated, sometimes angry, that while it is an inevitable observation, we continue to hear on a regular basis statements that make us wonder how our partners, our neighbors are going to de-escalate, to calm down.

Last time it was provoked by Statements of President Aliyev, Jr. and others. I don’t want to bore you, please, I refer you all to the Statement we had to make on September 16, 2004 at the 525th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council (Reference number: PC.DEL/914/04), in which I quoted extensively invitations for suicide bombings, that they should learn, as Azerbaijani politicians say, from the Chechens to

conduct such acts, and that somehow in 25-30 years there should not be an Armenian left in the Caucasus. It was a long, embarrassing awkward litany that I mentioned back then, and that still remains current with some additions now and then.

If, in fact, my distinguished colleague believes in everything he said, it would be obvious that Azerbaijan should interrupt and stop all further negotiations. If it really believes that every time there is a movement towards a resolution, Armenia reneges on it, and if I were them, I would say: “How can you negotiate with somebody that is always going back on his position?”

Actually, I can tell you, the same thing can be said about Armenia; because in our own experience we believe that we have made preliminary framework agreements which have not lasted long and our partners come back with a different switch, and different element, and different tack. I remember the ‘common state’ idea, which Azerbaijan declined and went back on its initial interest, I remember the long talks – you see how respectful I am, I call them talks but not negotiations – in Key-West, and I am aware, perhaps, my colleague is not, of the general framework under which the most recent bi-Ministerial meetings are taking place.

I think the Co-Chairs are accurate saying that it is a moment when it is possible to do something. When we talk about a moment like that, which our Ministers’ and Presidents’ discussions may not confirm but indicate then at that very moment for the highest authorities to come out saying: “You know what? With war we are going to do it!” may provoke a form of reciprocal hyperventilation.

As to the European Union, may I add few words, may I add an observation. People, including in the European Union, and all of us should not consider meetings here as the battle-ground. If we do not want noise here, let us reduce it on the ground, but do not expect for a certain amount of echo, resonance, expression not to occur here: If the situation on the ground represents a certain dynamic relationship of forces that is where the action is.

There were references to the cease-fire lines: How true! My Minister sent a letter to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Ministers of the Minsk Group Co-Chair countries requesting technical methods to monitor the Line of Contact, something which regularly, permanently and reliably Ambassador Kasprzyk and his team cannot do. There is technology today to count the hair on the moustache of a soldier from the air. We should be very easily able to find out on those borders where is the movement, where is the change, where is the breaking of the rules. Maybe we are the ones? We are willing to abide by it, but please let us not engage in these recriminations.

Our point is this: It would be nice if we did not have a polemical exchange and I hope when the European Union says “the restraint”, it invites to exercise the restraint on the ground, not only here.

Let me conclude with the following observation. One of the great challenges of multi-lateral diplomacy, the very core of diplomacy, is the fine, subtle, nuanced variation between even-handedness, neutrality, equal-playing field and so on, and so forth. It is in the perverse nature of processes that eventually the object of the activity becomes the perpetuation of the process itself.

Imagine ultimately if a judge wanted at all times to be fair and even, and is reluctant to basically say: “In this particular instance you are wrong. In this particular instance you have gone overboard. In this moment you are reneging on your commitment.” But when diplomats do not want to exercise that obligation we come to this court of public opinion, which is basically the worst court anybody can go to, and expect some kind of sympathy for our views.

The sort of the softened threat of the New Neighborhood Policy, perhaps, is what will work best, because the European Union is very able to have used the carrot and the stick relationship rather cleverly without ever showing a stick, and the stick simply being the possible withdrawal of the carrot. Perhaps, in the Caucasus that is the best way to shape everybody into line, but meanwhile, let me tell you, that it would be very encouraging at times to move away from theoretical, hypothetical, virtual definition of even-handedness.

By the way, that is the biggest challenge of the Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs are so scared of threatening the process that they can never say to anybody: “What you did contradicts what last week we decided to agree on”. Well, it keeps the process alive and as long as it is so shaky, I can tell you we are not able to move forward.

Finally, as you noticed, I chose not to address substantially the reply of my distinguished Azerbaijani colleague. That is a subject that we have dealt before and there is no reason to repeat it all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.