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PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**The provocation and use of force unleashed by Azerbaijan against Armenia
as delivered by Ms. Lilit Grigoryan, Deputy Head of Mission
at the 1461st meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
15 February 2024**

Madame Chair,

We have brought this current issue to the agenda of today's Permanent Council meeting to inform the participating States of the new provocation and aggression against the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia unleashed by Azerbaijan on February 13, 2024.

According to the information of the Ministry of Defence of Armenia, on February 13, at around 5:30 a.m. local time, Azerbaijani armed forces, with the use of combat UAVs, mortars and snipers, attacked the Armenian positions in the vicinity of the Nerkin Hand village of the Syunik province of Armenia. As a result, there are four killed and one wounded on the Armenian side.

It should be emphasized that on February 12, the Ministry of Defence of Armenia issued a statement stating that the claims of the Azerbaijani side about the alleged incident, which reportedly resulted in the wounding of an Azerbaijani serviceman, will be fully investigated and if proved to be correct, will have legal repercussions. However, Azerbaijan, ignoring this announcement, carried out a deadly attack the next morning, on February 13, killing four and wounding one Armenian serviceman. This clearly indicates that Azerbaijan is looking for pretexts to escalate the situation on the border and undermine the peace efforts.

In order to fully describe the gravity of this aggression it is important to underline that the fire was opened from the positions of the Azerbaijani army units which are located in the sovereign territory of Armenia and have been occupied since 2021. This once again demonstrates the urgent need for the immediate withdrawal of Azerbaijani armed forces from Armenia's sovereign territory.

Madame Chair,

It is obvious that these actions of Azerbaijan, which are aimed at destabilising the situation and creating pretexts for new large-scale aggressions, are an open disregard for the efforts made by international partners interested in stability and peace in the South Caucasus.

It is worth recalling that this use of force was preceded by bellicose statements and disinformation campaigns by the military and political leadership of Azerbaijan.

We have to state with regret that this recent aggression is the practical implementation of the recent pronouncements made by the President of Azerbaijan during the January 10, 2024, interview.

The recent violence on February 13 once again confirmed the lack of political will in Azerbaijan to move towards peace. Moreover, the inaugural speech of the President of Azerbaijan, where he again voiced threats against Armenia and sought to mingle in the internal political life of Armenia, represents textbook actions on how to disrupt a fragile peace process.

On top of that, state-affiliated media outlets of Azerbaijan are referring to this incident as a clash on the “conditional border” which is another testimony to the aggressive and illegal stance entertained by Azerbaijan—a manifestation of an undisguised claim towards sovereign Armenian territories. I want to reiterate that the interstate border between Armenia and Azerbaijan is clear, as both countries confirmed their adherence to the Almaty declaration, according to which administrative borders of former Soviet Republics were recognised as interstate borders.

With such actions, the leadership of Azerbaijan is also constantly trying to disrupt the efforts of international actors interested in stability and security in the South Caucasus to resume negotiations aimed at normalising Armenia-Azerbaijan relations.

As we have stated on numerous occasions, Azerbaijan’s refusal to participate in the meetings of Granada, Brussels, and Washington, followed by the use of force against Armenia on February 13, clearly indicates that we do not have a partner for peace but a country that openly declares that the might is right and constantly disrupts the peace process to impose one-sided maximalist solutions.

Our analysis shows that there is one reason for Azerbaijan’s actions, and this could be the beginning of a military escalation on some section of the border with the prospect of a large-scale war against Armenia.

Nevertheless, Armenia is committed to establishing durable peace and stability in the South Caucasus based on the agreements reflected in statements adopted in quadrilateral meetings in Prague in October 2022 and in Granada last autumn, as well as the trilateral meetings in Brussels on May 14 and July 15, 2023.

Madame Chair,

Taking this opportunity, we would like to welcome the continued engagement and commitment of our international partners in the efforts to establish sustainable peace and security in the South Caucasus. Armenia is determined to normalise relations with Azerbaijan and establish an enduring peace in the region, notwithstanding Azerbaijan's sabotage and destructive actions. In order to achieve long-lasting peace, however, the withdrawal of Azerbaijani armed forces from Armenia's sovereign territory and unambiguous mutual recognition of territorial integrity on the basis of the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991 are required. The most recent legitimate maps of 1991 should be the basis for the delimitation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

As far as transport routes are concerned, I have to once again emphasise that the unblocking of regional transport and economic communications shall take place under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of countries based on the principles of equality and reciprocity.

We once again reiterate that in order to bring long-lasting peace to the South Caucasus, the genuine engagement of Azerbaijan in good faith is required, and Armenia needs the strong support of international actors.

What we see is another attempt to backtrack from already agreed terms. Armenia has always negotiated in good faith with a sincere desire and steadfast commitment to building a peaceful South Caucasus. In this process, we need a reliable partner who shares the same objective. We still believe that Azerbaijan will be able to demonstrate true, genuine political will and will abandon its maximalist approach and aggressive policy for the sake of peace and prosperity in the region.

Armenia and the civilised world, the international community is ready for that. Now it's time for Azerbaijan to reciprocate.

Thank you.