

**Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia
H.E. Mr. Edward Nalbandian
at the 17th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council
Athens, 1-2 December, 2009**

ENGLISH only

Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I also would like to thank the Greek Chairmanship-in-Office for steering us throughout the year and for the hospitality we have enjoyed both in Corfu and here in Athens.

Mr. Chairman,

The Corfu process has given us an important format to raise and discuss in an open manner the most pressing issues that the OSCE currently faces. These discussions should not be an end in themselves, but rather a possibility to reflect our thoughts and the vision, in the informal setting in order to revitalise dialogue on key issues of our common agenda.

Being an organization that pursues the goal of consolidation of peace and stability, the OSCE has to revisit its toolkits and assess their effectiveness in responding to emerging challenges. To be effective, this process has to be based on equal participation and equal treatment of all participating states. It is important that we focus our efforts, first and foremost on the strengthening of the effectiveness of the OSCE and its institutions and take steps to balance our activities in all three dimensions.

The changing nature of international security environment has made us equally vulnerable in the face of traditional and new threats. Combating the transnational challenges require collective efforts and adequate response.

The developments in the OSCE area have emphasized the obvious need of adapting the European security architecture to the new realities, which will take into consideration all existing concerns. We restate our position regarding the idea of a new European Security Treaty, which would reaffirm the equality of the fundamental principles of international law, and would lead to the strengthening of commonly acceptable comprehensive and indivisible security.

The passing year marked serious round of discussions on the future of arms control arrangements in the OSCE area. We value in particular the efforts to strengthen arms control measures, including through the initiative on the Vienna document 1999.

In this context, the pattern of non-compliance of one State, Azerbaijan, to the core arms control regime, particularly by substantially exceeding maximum levels of holdings in at least two categories of armaments set by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, combined

with the war rhetoric, raises concerns about that country's real intentions. Azerbaijan violates one of the basic principles of the OSCE – the principle of non-use or threat of use of force.

Mr. Chairman,

Next year the international community is celebrating the 65th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. After that huge disaster and tragedy, the leaders of Europe, guided by the vision of a united and prosperous future for the next generations, had laid the foundation of cooperation and stability on the continent by creating conditions for all the peoples to live in dignity and security.

Guided by the same vision, the Armenian President has put forward an initiative aimed at normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations, of which I informed this distinguished Council last year. Today, I am pleased to state that we have made a significant step forward with the Turkish side, by signing the Protocols on the establishment of diplomatic relations and on the development of bilateral relations, on 10 October in Zurich. The next important step that the parties have committed to make is the ratification of the Protocols. We hope that this important step will be made and Armenia and Turkey will start implementation of the agreements reached. Unreasonable delays and preconditions in this process, including attempts to link this and Nagorno-Karabagh processes may harm the both.

We are grateful to the international community, including Switzerland, the USA, the Russian Federation, France and other EU members for the assistance in this process. However, despite strong support of all countries in the world, there is a member among us, Azerbaijan, that opposes the very idea of normalization between the two OSCE participating states and, therefore, runs counter to the values upon which this Organisation is based.

In accordance with the same values, Armenia continues its active involvement in the efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. During this year the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan have had six meetings within the OSCE Minsk Group process, which remains the solid framework for negotiations. Although the negotiating parties have made some progress in the discussion of the Madrid document, there are still issues that need to be addressed. Armenia is committed to a peaceful solution of the conflict, based on the norms and principles of international law, particularly the principles of non use or threat of use of force, self-determination and territorial integrity, which were reflected yesterday in the Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries, Armenia and Azerbaijan. We are convinced that in order to create an opportunity for the progress in the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, the parties should commit to refrain from the steps that could hamper the peace process, including the attempts, which have been made here in the speech of the Azerbaijani minister, to misinterpret the essence of the conflict and of the ongoing negotiations.

Mr. Chairman,

In this rapidly changing international environment it is important that we, as individual member states and Organisation as a whole, continue to respect our commitments and to strictly adhere to

the laws and principles governing our collective behavior. Failure to do so may undermine our efforts to strengthen this Organisation and therefore, to increase the capabilities of each and every participating state to contribute to a safer and better future in the OSCE area and throughout the world.

In conclusion, I would like to wish every success to the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE and to assure my distinguished Kazakh colleague that he can count on Armenia's assistance in the implementation of the Chairmanship's agenda and smooth organisation of the proposed summit.

Thank you.