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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT

**on the International Women`s Day by Ambassador Armen Papikyan,
Permanent Representative of Armenia,
at the 1305th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

March 11, 2021

Madame Chairperson,

At the outset, let me join others in emphasising the importance of observing the International Women's Day, which should not be limited to mere celebration, but also be seen as an occasion to take stock of the accomplishments and the challenges ahead, when it comes to creation of equal opportunities for and empowerment of women. Indeed, the International Women's Day is a time to reflect on the progress made and to look at the advancement of women's rights from various angles, since each year offers new challenges and new opportunities.

That being said, 2020 has been a particularly challenging year globally. Obviously, it has not been marked by outstanding achievements in promotion of human rights, including the rights of women. On the contrary, unprecedented circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as lockdowns, have created new types of challenges that disproportionately affected women and girls, undermining their rights and limiting their livelihoods.

Madame Chairperson,

The devastating consequences of the 44-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan with the direct involvement of Turkey and Turkey-backed foreign terrorist fighters, have created new challenges for Armenian women and girls, and particularly exacerbated the plight of those living in conflict-affected areas. They were struggling to survive between the pandemic and the war. Even hospitals and a maternity house have become targets of indiscriminate shelling by Azerbaijani armed forces.

During this violent war, a number of Armenian women, not only civilians but also members of military personnel, were killed. There have also been cases of torture and mutilation of the bodies of killed women. Among them were Nina Davityan and Elena Hakobyan, 83-year-old and 68-year-old residents of the Hadrut region of Artsakh, who were found beheaded in their homes. The perpetrators of these crimes should be held accountable.

Madame Chairperson,

As we mark the International Women's Day, our thoughts are with our fellow compatriots, including women who are held captive by Azerbaijan and face threats to their lives. Ironically, this situation resulting from a flagrant violation of fundamental OSCE principles and international humanitarian law, is taking place during the OSCE Chairpersonship of Sweden, a country renowned for its leadership in global efforts towards empowering women and for advocating for their rights. In many aspects, Sweden's achievements in this area are exemplary. Therefore, our expectations are high. In this context it will be appropriate to recall the words of Margaret Thatcher: "If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman." We expect that the Chairperson-in-Office will redouble its efforts to repatriate Armenian prisoners of war and hostages, including women. This will be the best evidence that the promotion of human rights, in particular the rights of women, is pursued not only in words, but also in deeds. We also hope that the participating States will support Sweden in these efforts.

Madame Chairperson,

Armenia is further committed to the promotion and protection of women's rights. The national agenda of advancing women's rights has been further streamlined by the adoption of the National Action Plan on the implementation of UN SC Resolution 1325. Increasing women's participation in the security sector, promoting their political participation and economic empowerment, including through different programmatic activities, are important elements of the implementation of the Action Plan. Furthermore, we believe that women should be more actively engaged in the process of conflict resolution. The majority of the population of Armenia are women, and we would like to see more active participation of women in the socio-economic life of Armenia. Creating opportunities and harnessing the benefits of women's able engagement is paramount in terms of social cohesion and advancement of women's rights.

I thank you.