

Chairmanship: Sweden

1307th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1. Date: Thursday, 25 March 2021 (via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.
Suspended: 1.10 p.m.
Resumed: 3 p.m.
Closed: 5 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador U. Funered

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION TO
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Chairperson, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (PC.FR/8/21 OSCE+), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/467/21), United Kingdom (PC.DEL/459/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/423/21 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/454/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/420/21), Norway (PC.DEL/429/21), Bosnia and Herzegovina (PC.DEL/431/21 OSCE+)

Agenda item 2: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson, Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (SEC.GAL/41/21 Restr.)

(a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea*: Ukraine (PC.DEL/427/21), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/470/21), United Kingdom, Canada

(PC.DEL/472/21 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/465/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/421/21), Switzerland

- (b) *Situation in Ukraine and the need to implement the Minsk agreements:* Russian Federation (PC.DEL/430/21), Ukraine
- (c) *The aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and Armenia with the direct involvement of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters:* Armenia (Annex 1)
- (d) *Mass and systemic violations of human rights in the United States of America:* Russian Federation (PC.DEL/424/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/428/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/426/21)
- (e) *Constitutional reform in Kyrgyzstan:* Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Canada and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/471/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/439/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom (also on behalf of Norway), United States of America (PC.DEL/425/21), Kyrgyzstan
- (f) *Freedom of assembly in the Russian Federation:* Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Canada, Georgia and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/468/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/441/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom, United States of America (PC.DEL/432/21), Norway (PC.DEL/445/21), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/452/21 OSCE+)
- (g) *Recent developments in Belarus:* United Kingdom (also on behalf of Canada) (PC.DEL/436/21 OSCE+), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/469/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/440/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/434/21), Norway (PC.DEL/447/21), Poland (PC.DEL/435/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/456/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/444/21 OSCE+)
- (h) *Twenty-second anniversary of NATO's aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia:* Serbia (PC.DEL/448/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/450/21)
- (i) *Twenty-second anniversary of NATO's response to the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo:* United States of America (PC.DEL/442/21), Albania (PC.DEL/446/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom (PC.DEL/462/21 OSCE+), Italy (Annex 2), Germany (Annex 3), France

- (j) *Turkey's withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention):* Germany (also on behalf of Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) (Annex 4), United States of America (PC.DEL/443/21), Canada, Norway (PC.DEL/449/21), Liechtenstein, Turkey (Annex 5)

Agenda item 3: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
 CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

- (a) *OSCE-wide counter-terrorism conference on "Reinforcing a Comprehensive Approach to Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism in a Changing Landscape", to be held in Vienna via video teleconference on 20 and 21 April 2021:* Chairperson
- (b) *Meeting between the Chairperson-in-Office and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mr. J. Borrell Fontelles, held on 22 March 2021:* Chairperson
- (c) *Participation by the Chairperson-in-Office on 25 March 2021 in a side event on "Equal and resilient economies and societies" at the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, being held in New York and via video teleconference from 15 to 26 March 2021:* Chairperson
- (d) *Photography exhibition on a gender-equal world by photographer Ms. A. Brolenius, being held in Vienna from 24 March to 7 April 2021:* Chairperson
- (e) *Briefing on the monthly priorities of the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship, in particular on the horizontal issue of gender equality:* Chairperson

Agenda item 4: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Announcement of the distribution of a written report of the Secretary General (SEC.GAL/43/21 OSCE+):* Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre
- (b) *Update on the COVID-19 situation across the OSCE executive structures:* Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (SEC.GAL/43/21 OSCE+)
- (c) *OSCE-wide round-table discussion on the impact of "vaccine passports" on the operations of border security and management agencies, co-ordinated by the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department and held via video teleconference on 18 March 2021:* Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (SEC.GAL/43/21 OSCE+)
- (d) *Workshop on the responses of law enforcement agencies to the COVID-19 pandemic, organized by the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats*

Department, in co-operation with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, held on 18 March 2021: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (SEC.GAL/43/21 OSCE+)

- (e) *E-learning course on the OSCE's cyber/ICT security-related confidence-building measures, developed by the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department and launched on 22 March 2021: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (SEC.GAL/43/21 OSCE+)*
- (f) *Online workshop for members of the OSCE Gender Equality Platform for Border Security and Management on gender mainstreaming in the human resources departments of border and law enforcement agencies, organized by the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department and Department of Human Resources and held on 23 March 2021: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (SEC.GAL/43/21 OSCE+)*
- (g) *Series of online meetings with key interlocutors in Bosnia and Herzegovina to study the risks of trafficking faced by the migrant community, conducted by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Mr. V. Richey, and the Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Ms. M. Cederfelt, in co-ordination with the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and held during the week of 22 to 26 March 2021: Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (SEC.GAL/43/21 OSCE+)*

Agenda item 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Fifth anniversary of the 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels, observed on 22 March 2021: Belgium (PC.DEL/461/21)*
- (b) *Launch of the Generation Equality Forum, co-hosted by France and Mexico, to be held in Mexico City from 29 to 31 March 2021: France (PC.DEL/453/21 OSCE+)*
- (c) *Lessons from the Khatyn massacre in 1943 and preventing the glorification of Nazism: Belarus (PC.DEL/451/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/455/21)*

4. Next meeting:

To be announced



1307th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1307, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

Madam Chairperson,

Almost five months after the signing of the trilateral ceasefire statement of 9 November 2020, which put an end to the violent war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan and its affiliates, the Azerbaijani authorities continue to flagrantly violate international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions, decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and ignore calls from the international community for the immediate release of all Armenian prisoners of war and other detainees. The latest such call was made in a joint statement by members of the European Parliament, in particular by the head of the delegation for relations with the South Caucasus and standing rapporteurs of the European Parliament on Armenia and Azerbaijan. The members of the European Parliament expressed grave concern about the mistreatment of Armenian prisoners of war as documented and reported by Human Rights Watch.

This latest report of Human Rights Watch further reveals the cruel and degrading treatment and torture of Armenian prisoners of war in Azerbaijan and underlines that, and I quote: “The abuse, including torture of detained Armenian soldiers, is abhorrent and a war crime. It is also deeply disturbing that a number of missing Armenian soldiers were last seen in Azerbaijan’s custody and it has failed to account for them,” end of quote. Thus, the report clearly indicates a high probability of mass enforced disappearances not only of military personnel, but also of captured civilians.

Against this backdrop, the deafening silence of the OSCE, both during and after the war, which has a strong mandate not only in relation to security-related matters, but also human rights, is indeed regrettable, to put it mildly.

Apart from individual appeals of several participating States, there has been no single appeal, no strong political message from the OSCE demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the Armenian prisoners of war.

The absence of a meaningful, international, including the OSCE, engagement, has led to an atmosphere of impunity, which Azerbaijan has been exploiting fully both during and after its war of aggression. It no longer sees any point even in pretending to comply with its international obligations, including OSCE commitments.

Madam Chairperson,

The actions of Azerbaijan can hardly be justified either by international humanitarian law or by the 9 November trilateral ceasefire statement. Whatever status the Azerbaijani authorities may try to arbitrarily assign to the Armenian prisoners of war, the trilateral ceasefire statement, namely its paragraph 8 prescribes, and I quote: “An exchange of prisoners of war, hostages and other detained persons and bodies of the dead shall be carried out.” In other words, we are speaking about complete and unconditional return of all detainees, without exceptions or exclusions.

In light of the above, and given that Azerbaijan also continues to hide information about Armenian prisoners of war, the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan claiming that, and I quote, “there are no women of Armenian origin in Azerbaijani custody”, end of quote, is particularly alarming, since, according to our information, 76-year-old Elsa Sargsyan, as well as mother and daughter Varya and Anahit Tunyans went missing after Azerbaijan took control of the Hadrut region of Artsakh.

Madam Chairperson,

The occupation of the Hadrut region of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, resulted in complete destruction of thriving settlements with tens of thousands of Armenian inhabitants and killings of civilians, including the extrajudicial executions of captured civilians. The international community, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as Human Rights Watch, have expressed their clear position on cases of flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention in the Hadrut region.

The statements made by the President of Azerbaijan during his visit to Artsakh’s occupied Hadrut region reveal the intention to destroy Armenian settlements and replace them with the Azerbaijani ones, which violates the provisions of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020, according to which the displaced persons must return to their places of residence. It also proves that the Armenians of Artsakh cannot survive under Azerbaijani control.

Moreover, within the framework of its policy of ethnic cleansing, Azerbaijan is undertaking consistent steps aimed at annihilating or appropriating the Armenian cultural heritage of Artsakh. In parallel with the physical destruction of the religious and cultural monuments of Artsakh, which remain on the territories currently under its control, the Azerbaijani authorities at the highest level resort to a deplorable practice of falsifying historical facts and alienating the religious and cultural heritage of the Armenian people.

It is with this purpose that the President of Azerbaijan misrepresents the nature of the 17th century Armenian church in the village of Tsakuri of the Hadrut region distortedly claiming it to be of so-called “Albanian” heritage and labelling the Armenian inscriptions on its walls as “fake”, thus preparing ground for yet another act of vandalism. It is noteworthy that in the published video, the above-mentioned church has already been vandalized, as the religious symbols had already been removed.

This delegation persistently raises the issue of the fate of the Armenian religious and cultural monuments and sites that are on the territories under the Azerbaijani occupation.

Unfortunately, and we attribute this too to the lack of robust international reaction with the aim to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its actions directed against the cultural heritage of the Armenian people, the barbaric destruction of the Armenian religious and cultural monuments and sites continues unabated. Azerbaijan simply erases to the ground those sites whose Armenian origin and identity cannot be altered. The BBC correspondent in the documentary released today under the title “Nagorno-Karabakh: the mystery of the missing church” is about such a case of the Armenian Church of the Holy Mother of God in Mekhakavan. I should recall that this delegation has already brought the issue of the fate of this Church to the attention of the Permanent Council on 19 November 2020, during the 1290th Permanent Council meeting, showing the footage of desecration and vandalism of the Church by Azerbaijani soldier who was standing on the bell tower of that church and shouting “Allahu Akbar”. And today, the complete destruction of the church became known from the investigation of the BBC correspondent who could not find any traces of the church, while knowing for sure that the church was standing when the Azerbaijani armed forces took control of Mekhakavan.

Madam Chairperson,

Two extremely dangerous precedents were created as a result of Azerbaijan’s war of aggression against Artsakh and its people: first, an attempt to resolve conflicts by use of force and mass atrocities, and second, recruitment, transfer and deployment by OSCE participating States of foreign terrorist fighters and jihadists into the OSCE area of responsibility.

Both precedents should have been a matter of serious concern and scrutiny for the OSCE relevant structures during the war and in its aftermath. Regrettably, this is not the case. Moreover, we see the continued lack of willingness or readiness on the part of those structures to deliver on their mandate.

We would not like to see this organization becoming handicapped with an agenda narrowed down to only a couple of issues, whereas the OSCE is founded on the concept of comprehensive and indivisible security, that is to say that the security challenges and concerns of any participating State should be considered equally important to all. Prioritizing security-related and other concerns of some participating States at the expense of others is the way to turn this organization into a forum for geopolitical rivalry, which is contrary to the whole idea of the OSCE as a framework for enhancing peace and security in Europe. Such an approach cannot be supported by this delegation.

Madam Chairperson,

The current situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is the result of a flagrant violation by Azerbaijan of several core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely, refraining from the threat or use of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. There should be no illusion that the results of the use of force, accompanied by war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, can ever become the basis for a lasting and sustainable peace. Durable and sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved through a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which must include the determination of the status of Artsakh based on the realization by the people of Artsakh of their inalienable right to

self-determination, ensuring the safe and dignified return of the recently displaced population to their homes, and preservation of the cultural and religious heritage of the region.

Madam Chairperson, I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1307
25 March 2021
Annex 2

ENGLISH
Original: ITALIAN

1307th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1307, Agenda item 2(i)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ITALY**

After more than 20 years, I believe it is appropriate to recall first of all the historical circumstances that led NATO to intervene in Kosovo in 1999, an intervention that came at the culmination of the international community's repeated attempts to find a diplomatic solution, to which Italy made a significant contribution and lent its firm support, in order to put a stop to the violence and the blatant violation of human rights.

I believe that it is also our duty here to express our renewed sympathies to the families of all the victims of those tragic events that shook the region in 1999.

The profoundly humanitarian reasons for that intervention cannot be forgotten and must make us reflect on the importance of dialogue and diplomacy as a valuable resource for building prospects for peace and prosperity. With this spirit, which inspires this Organization and in which it identifies itself, we look to the future with confidence in the knowledge of the progress made in building the partnership between NATO and Serbia in recent years.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1307

25 March 2021

Annex 3

ENGLISH

Original: GERMAN

1307th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1307, Agenda item 2(i)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF GERMANY**

Participation in the NATO operation against Yugoslavia was not a simple decision for Germany. The operation took place following intensive diplomatic efforts by the international community and after all peaceful means for settlement had been exhausted.

We must not forget that a devastating humanitarian disaster with massive human rights violations occurred in Kosovo in the spring of 1999. In the light of this situation and following considerable and intensive diplomatic efforts, the NATO operation was the only remaining way to avert this disaster. Not to act would have been irresponsible in view of the serious, systematic human rights violations.

I should like to emphasize that the operation was never directed against the Serbian population. Its sole purpose was to protect the civilian population of Kosovo.

Every human life lost was and is a tragedy. We mourn all of the civilian victims and express our condolences to their families.

After the international community had used up without success all available means for settling the conflict peacefully and avoiding a humanitarian disaster, the NATO operation was justified as a last resort under the exceptional circumstances of the Kosovo crisis. United Nations Security Council resolution 1199 of 23 September 1998 and the United Nations Secretary-General's report of 4 September 1998, on which it was based, clearly describe this exceptional crisis situation in Kosovo. Resolution 1199 and resolution 1203 of 24 October 1998 adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations clearly noted that the situation in Kosovo represented a serious threat to peace and security in the region.

While we must not forget the past, we must also look to the future. Today, almost 22 years after the end of that bloody war, democracy is flourishing in the Western Balkans, the economy is becoming more stable, and the region is slowly coming together. Together with the international community, the Federal Republic of Germany will continue to support the people in the region on their way to sustainable peace in a common European perspective.



1307th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1307, Agenda item 2(j)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF GERMANY (ALSO ON BEHALF OF
ANDORRA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, CANADA, CROATIA, CYPRUS,
THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FINLAND, FRANCE,
GREECE, ICELAND, IRELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LUXEMBOURG,
MALTA, MONACO, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORTH
MACEDONIA, NORWAY, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SAN MARINO,
SERBIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND AND
THE UNITED KINGDOM)**

Madam Chairperson,

I would like to make this statement on behalf of the following countries: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom as well as my own country Germany.

Under this current issue, we would like to focus on Turkey's withdrawal from the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, commonly known as the Istanbul Convention.

We deeply regret Turkey's decision to withdraw from the Convention. The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching legal instrument we have to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, as well as to ensure protection for victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

This is today more important than ever, as violence against women and girls has increased worldwide as a result of the many conflicts where women are the primary victims, and in particular, in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Istanbul Convention has had a positive effect on the lives of women and girls and their communities. According to GREVIO, the monitoring body of the Istanbul Convention, implementation of the Convention has led to improvements in particular with regard to legislation, practices, support services, training of professionals and awareness-raising.

Turkey's decision to leave the convention is a setback to the collective effort to eliminate violence against women and girls and the fight against domestic violence. It is regrettable because it weakens the protection of women and girls in Turkey.

Turkey was the first Member State of the Council of Europe to ratify the Convention in 2012. The Convention was opened for signature during the Turkish chairmanship ten years ago.

International standards are the backbone of gender equality and human rights. That is why Turkey's withdrawal is a disappointment also from the point of view of our common rules-based multilateral order, which is the basis for all human rights protection.

In addition, at the OSCE, there is an extensive body of commitments and activities aiming to end violence against women and girls. Ministerial Council Decision No. 4/18 provides a solid basis for our work, including in addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence.

We call on the Turkish Government to reconsider its decision and to renew its commitment to the Convention. We join those urging the Government of the Republic of Turkey to continue protecting and promoting the safety and rights of all women and girls on the basis of international human rights law.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1307
25 March 2021
Annex 5

Original: ENGLISH

1307th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1307, Agenda item 2(j)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

We have taken note of the statements of the distinguished delegations taking the floor.

Turkey has always stood by women on the advancement of their rights, the strengthening of their role within society and their protection against violence. Turkey has supported the efforts of the international community to protect and promote women's rights both in terms of legislative framework and in practice.

It is with this understanding that Turkey became party to the Istanbul Convention. The primary aim of the Convention is the protection of women against all forms of violence, as well as the prevention, prosecution and elimination of violence against women and domestic violence. That being said, the Convention has been subject of debate since the day it came into force. In different segments of our society, some elements of the Convention became subject to criticism. As a result of the evaluation made, the decision to withdraw from the Convention was taken.

Actually, within the Council of Europe itself, the Convention is being contested in many countries. Some countries and parties which have signed the Convention have refrained from ratifying it. Furthermore, countries of some esteemed delegations that have taken the floor today criticizing Turkey did not even sign the document which is open also to non-members of the Council of Europe.

The withdrawal of Turkey from the Convention should not be interpreted as a step back in fighting violence against women. Women's rights are guaranteed in the national legislation with the most advanced norms. As was the case until now, our country will continue to pursue zero tolerance towards violence against women, to take all necessary measures in co-operation with its respective authorities and institutions with a view to further strengthening women's rights and more effectively fighting violence against women.

Madam Chairperson, I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.