

Statement by Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group

Vienna
July 13th, 2007

1. We, the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group find it necessary to give our assessment of the emerging situation in the settlement process for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in light of the recent meeting between the President of the Republic of Armenia R. KOCHARIAN and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan I. ALIYEV in St Petersburg.
2. At the Co-Chairs' suggestion, during this meeting the Presidents concentrated their discussion on a limited number of obstacles that stand in the way of agreement on a set of basic principles for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Unfortunately, the Presidents could not overcome these remaining differences. Thus, the two sides are approaching 2008 – a year of presidential elections in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, when, as past experience shows, chances for progress will likely be overshadowed by the electoral campaigns. Without an endorsement of the basic principles at the presidential level, it is impossible to start drafting the text of an agreement on the peaceful settlement of the conflict, or to secure the progress of the past three years of negotiations in order not to reopen them from scratch whenever they resume again.
3. The Co-Chairs recognize that preservation of the status quo after thirteen years of “no peace-no war” in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict may seem less difficult for the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan than the mutual compromises that will lead to an equitable and lasting settlement of the conflict and, ultimately, to a new era of peace and prosperity for their people. However if the parties to the conflict choose nevertheless to avoid making courageous decisions now, we as mediators cannot make these decisions in their place.
4. We take due note of the parties' recent statements of their willingness to continue the negotiations on the basis of what has been developed over the past years. We urge them to give life to these statements in the limited time remaining and to make resolute efforts to consider again the fairly distributed benefits of the solution embodied by the proposed basic principles. To that end, the Co-Chairs are ready to assist the parties in the preparation for their next summit, at the first opportunity, in the coming months.

5. Recently both sides showed their ability to create more favorable conditions for preparing their public opinion for peace by organizing a joint visit to Nagorno-Karabakh, Yerevan and Baku of a group of their intellectuals. The Co-Chairs welcomed and highly appreciated that event, which they consider as a first concrete confidence building measure such as the Co-Chairs have constantly proposed and encouraged in numerous fields to develop trust between the parties. In this respect, the Co-Chairs regret that the recommendations of the OSCE-led environmental assessment mission last year have not been carried out and call upon the parties to make possible their implementation.
6. Unfortunately, the Co-Chairs observe with concern several current developments that, in their view, do not contribute to preparation of the populations for peace. Among these are militaristic statements threatening use of force and creating the dangerous illusion that war is an option for resolution of the conflict. The upcoming so-called presidential elections in Nagorno-Karabakh have already caused an increase in tensions. Recalling their statements with respect to previous votings in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Co-Chairs reiterate that, like all other members of the international community, their countries do not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent state, and such “elections” should not have any impact on the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Finally, the Co-Chairs stress the primary role of the OSCE Minsk Group in mediation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They note that unilateral initiatives in other organizations can increase tensions and disrupt the negotiation process. Therefore, they urge the sides to focus their attention in the coming months on making real progress in the negotiations mediated by the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen.