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**Statement
at the 550th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
14 April 2005**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At the last meeting of the Permanent Council the representative of Armenia made a statement with regard to a number of aspects of the conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. I would like to use this opportunity to address these aspects today.

Mr. Chairman,

It is a well-known fact that as a result of the armed aggression by the Republic of Armenia 20 % of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan have been occupied. As a sequence of ethnic cleansings more than a million of Azerbaijanis were forced to leave their homes in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and 7 other occupied regions.

These recent tragic events were not the first episode in the history of persecution of Azerbaijanis by Armenian extremists and chauvinists, which started long ago. In 1905-1907 and 1918-1920 the Armenian militants killed many thousands of Azerbaijanis. The massive deportations of Azerbaijani population from Armenia were organized and carried out in 1948-1953 and 1987-1988.

Mr. Chairman,

Speaking of these events we are not trying to demonize Armenia or the Armenian people. We are just reminding of actions of extremist and aggressive nationalist forces, moved by dangerous ideas based on the myths. The aim of these forces is to expand their territory and purge it of others. We wish to live in peace and concord with Armenia, as well as our citizens from the Nagorno-Karabakh region. We have a rich experience of good neighborhood and cooperation with Armenians, which covers a period much longer, than periods of tension and conflicts. We know that the sensible forces, forces ready for a compromise and realizing the danger of coming out from the position of force

and violation of international law existed and still exist in Armenia. However, every time that a real opportunity to find compromise appeared, the force majeure situations, to put it mildly, were emerging in Armenia, where the head of state was deposed as a result of pressure or the tragic shooting took place in the Parliament. It is the very initiators of these events continue the negative tradition of sustaining the spirit of aggressive nationalism. It is the very persons who stand between our two nations.

Mr. Chairman,

Last week the Armenian representative accused my country with anti-Armenian propaganda and hate speech. It is obvious that victims of aggression and occupation can hardly be expected to demonstrate signs of affection towards the aggressors and occupants. However, in spite of all the facts of persecution mentioned above we never said that Azerbaijanis and Armenians cannot live side by side in peace and security, once the conflict between our countries is resolved.

Unfortunately the Armenian side, including the most senior officials, chose quite different rhetoric. For instance, in his press release issued on January 30, 2003, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe voiced his regret at the declaration made by President Kocharian of Armenia on "*ethnic incompatibility between Armenians and Azerbaijanis*". I believe, Mr. Chairman, that this declaration by the President of Armenia sheds light on many issues and gives a serious food for thought.

With regard to the results of the OSCE Minsk Group-led Fact-finding Mission, which has recently visited the occupied regions of Azerbaijan, we would like to reiterate that the findings of the Mission have in principle confirmed the original estimates of the Azerbaijani side, submitted to the Mission prior the visit. We believe that other aspects of this issue need to be further examined and clarified.

Mr. Chairman,

Armenia is extremely interested in consolidating the results of its aggression, occupation and ethnic cleansing. To this end Armenia is trying to freeze the *status quo* achieved through unlawful means. Numerous statements by the leadership of Armenia that the so-called "*Nagorno-Karabakh Republic*" has been "*independent*" for 15 years and that this process is irreversible clearly demonstrate the true intentions of the Armenian side. This explains the destructive position taken by Armenia with regard to the ongoing peace process.

Trying to undermine this difficult process the Armenian side has been consistently opening fire at the frontline. Between March 3 and April 8 the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia, deployed in the occupied territories of

Azerbaijan and at the Armenian-Azerbaijani international border, violated the cease-fire on 34 occasions, in several instances 4 times a day. As a result of this shooting the Azerbaijani side has sustained numerous casualties, which included not the military servicemen only, but also the peaceful civilians, mostly farmers and shepherds, involved in the spring season agricultural works.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that the best mechanism to enforce the cease-fire is to respect it fully and unconditionally. The violations of cease-fire represent yet another goal-oriented attempt of the Armenian side to freeze the *status quo*. That is why Armenia violates the cease fire and then makes a statement at the Permanent Council, trying to blame Azerbaijan for it and thus to aggravate the environment around the conflict, and to impede the ongoing Prague process.

Azerbaijan however is not interested in freezing the conflict at all, since it is our country that bears a burden of the most grave consequences of it, which are the continuing occupation of Azerbaijani lands, hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs and many other factors. The countries co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group know well how many proposals on the conflict resolution have been put forward by Azerbaijan and how they have been rejected.

Armenia must liberate all the territories it has occupied. All refugees and IDPs will be able to return to the region under the guarantees of international community. Reliable connection between Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region can be provided through the Lachin road, which will be further extended and provide a reliable connection of the mainland Azerbaijan to Nakhchyvan. But Armenia wishes to create the buffer zone around the Nagorno-Karabakh. This, Mr. Chairman, is nothing else but a clear attempt to postpone the possibility of peace. Following the guidance of principles of European community we have to move along the path of integration and not the path of division.

Mr. Chairman,

The tolerance and patience of the Azerbaijani people are vast, but they cannot be exploited infinitely. The conflict is taking place in the territory of Azerbaijan and therefore Azerbaijan is responsible for restoration of constitutional rights of its citizens, including the right to live in their homes and freedom of movement on its own territory, and it will do so.

Thank you.