



**Statement
on Avian Flu
at the 588th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
January 19, 2006**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to start with thanking the US Delegation for bringing this issue to the fore-front and having set the stage for discussion on this very urgent security risk appearing on our horizon.

The Delegation of the Republic of Armenia would like to inform this Council of the actions undertaken by the government of the country to counter the risk of Avian Flu unfolding within our borders. After the FAO reacted to the spread of Avian Flu in 2005 putting a number of Black Sea region countries on the list of a high-risk zone, the Armenian government in October last year banned the importation of poultry from those countries that are already and directly affected by this epidemic. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Environment has prohibited the hunt for wild bird and the Ministry of Health developed an Action Plan to counter a possible flu pandemic.

An awareness-raising campaign has been initiated throughout the country to address the issue. Preventive injections and other medical precautions were taken in order to protect first and foremost those who may catch the Avian Flu, such as people involved in the poultry sector of agriculture, the populations of the regions bordering areas affected by the epidemic, as well as employees of the customs service. Special measures were also undertaken both for the handling of transportation means and passengers arriving from the countries where avian populations are infected.

Special sections for the possible treatment of victims of an eventual pandemic were established in the leading hospital for the treatment of infectious diseases. A special inter-agency coordinating mechanism has been established for early action in case the veterinary services detect and diagnose any case of avian infection. Another special mechanism has also been developed for coordination with World Health Organization and other relevant international agencies.

The Foreign Ministry in its turn issued several appeals to the Armenian citizens warning them to exercise caution with travel to countries, places and areas affected. The Ministry also attempts to get information from neighboring countries and other affected areas through the use of existing or possible diplomatic channels.

As we have presented actions taken so far, in fact an inventory of what our government has done already, the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia would like to conclude that this is a perfect case to underline the need to encourage and develop regional cooperation, despite the existing and outstanding political problems and

disagreements between neighbors in our region. Viruses are indifferent to borders, conflicts and political disputes. Our own contingency planning could not have been more timely since the threat has gotten very close to our borders.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.