



**ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՊԱՏՎԻՐԱԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ**  
**DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**  
**ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

**Statement**

**In Response to Volker Türk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection  
delivered by the Permanent Delegation of Armenia at the 1135th Meeting of the  
OSCE Permanent Council  
March 02, 2017**

Mr. Chairman,

We join other colleagues in welcoming Mr. Volker Türk and thanking him for the comprehensive presentation.

At the outset we would like to recall that topic of displacement is highly relevant for Armenia as a country, which hosts hundreds of thousands refugees from Azerbaijan, Syria and Iraq. Displacement has been a feature of Armenian people in 20th century. It is difficult to find an Armenian both in Armenia and Diaspora whose ancestors have not been displaced. Nowadays Armenia is receiving tens of thousands Syrian Armenian refugees, whose group has been displaced for the second time in last century.

Armenia values close cooperation with the UNHCR aimed at addressing the needs of displaced and provide necessary protection to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Government of Armenia jointly with UNHCR implemented a number of programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of more than 400 thousand refugees from Azerbaijan, providing housing and guarantying their human rights and fundamental freedoms. According to UNHCR data until the year of 2005 Armenia was heading the list of countries with the largest number of refugees per 1000 people, which indicates the scale of challenge, we faced.

From the first days of arrival of the refugees, the Republic of Armenia adopted integration policy for refugees despite the social and economic difficulties the country was facing. The integration policy for refugees has been yielding tangible results.

Having said this, we fully agree with your assessment that durable solutions include also options in addition to return. The international community should send a strong message to those Governments, who instrumentalize their displaced population to reach political objectives at the expense of human rights and fundamental freedoms of displaced people.

Today, Armenia is also hosting about 20.000 refugees from Syria, who sought protection in our country, making it the third largest recipient of Syrian refugees in Europe on per capita basis. The Government of Armenia has undertaken complex protection measures to facilitate their integration into our society and address their economic and social problems. In addressing the needs of Syrian Armenian refugees

the Armenian authorities have developed close cooperation with the international organizations, including the UNHCR, UNICEF, UN World Food Programme and the OSCE. We assure you of our firm commitment to further promote integration of persons who fled the conflict in Syria and continue support of their admission, including through the operation of our consulate in Aleppo, the only remaining diplomatic mission in that city, which operated without interruption. In addition, Armenia is providing humanitarian assistance to displaced population in Syria.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to take the opportunity to reiterate our concerns on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of refugees and internally displaced persons, residing in conflict areas, as the most vulnerable category of displaced people.

The number of internally displaced people, namely 37000, constitutes more than one quarter of the current population of NK. In addition to the above number, preplanned massive large-scale offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh in April 2016 and committed atrocities against civilian population by Azerbaijan led to new displacement.

In this regard the Government of Armenia values humanitarian response by the UNHCR Representation in Armenia, which quickly reached out even to the remotest parts of our country, offering targeted core relief items and within shortest time put into operation a cash based intervention system assisting the most needed. The displaced population, residing in conflict areas should not be deprived of international protection. The international organizations, including UNHCR and the UN special procedures should have unconditional access to the conflict areas.

The OSCE Ministerial decision 3/11 on conflict cycle determines the urgency of the OSCE involvement in preventing forced displacement and assisting particularly those who are at danger of displacement. We see the role of OSCE in facilitating the activities of the UNHCR and the UN special procedures in addressing the issue of displacement in the OSCE area, including unhindered access to the conflict areas.

In conclusion, we wish you, Mr. Türk, all success in your responsible mission.

Thank you.