



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply on the Situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 26, 2020

Having listened to the conversation, I feel compelled to say a few additional things here before we adjourn, so all of us can enjoy our U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving.

First of all, I think this may be an ongoing conversation from now on at the Permanent Council, and that may be a good thing, that we have an opportunity for all 57 countries to explain their thinking about the situation that is ongoing in Nagorno-Karabakh. I think we should commend President Putin for his efforts to act on an emergency basis in order to bring a cease fire, and I think that all of the countries that have spoken have recognized that.

The United States' intention today is simply to reaffirm the role of the Minsk Group on behalf of the OSCE, the Minsk Group acts on behalf of the OSCE, and to assert that it remains an independent vehicle in the conflict, if that is sought. The implication of my friend from Azerbaijan is that, perhaps somewhat haplessly, the Minsk Group was seeking a role. The role of the Minsk Group is directly conferred by the sides and the countries that are directly involved. Its role is that of a mediator, not a governor of the situation. A mediator, and a negotiation vehicle, if it is sought, if not today, then I was asserting it may one day be sought in the future. The power for the Minsk Group must be given to it by the sides.

I would point out this, the implication that I heard, and again, we will continue this conversation if not today then in the future, is that the responsibility for the future political settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh region, beyond the cease fire, may rest exclusively with Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. So be it. But it must be said, that the suggestion of the United States regarding the Minsk Group is not an effort to impose anything on anyone, it is simply an opportunity to draw in the entire OSCE for a long-term political settlement. All 57 countries may be in a position to aid in mediation and, ultimately, in reaching a political settlement.

If it does not, then we will see how the situation progresses with the absence of Minsk Group participation. The obligation for a future political settlement, perhaps will be elsewhere. We would suggest that so far the future is unclear and the Minsk Group offers an opportunity to clarify this future and to help shape it, together in partnership with not only the countries that have been named by Azerbaijan here today, but with all 57 OSCE participating States, which gives a better opportunity for a lasting peace.

In the absence of that, the United States is concerned that this ongoing issue, which could be semi-permanent again, will be a threat not only to the countries in the region, but to the countries throughout the OSCE generally.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.