



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

**Address**

**H.E. Mr. Edward Nalbandian**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia**  
**955<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**  
**Vienna, 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2013**

Mr. Chairman,

It is a pleasure to address this distinguished forum in my capacity as the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

On 16th of May 2013 Armenia has assumed the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Assuming for the first time the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers since Armenia's accession to the Council of Europe is an important task. It is an opportunity, a challenge and a big responsibility.

It is an opportunity because Armenia for the next six months will be at the forefront of our common efforts to contribute to democratic development of Europe.

It is a challenge as we all are facing numerous problems on the continent, which can create difficulties in consolidation of our fundamental values.

It is a big responsibility because the success of our common efforts not only depends on individual contribution of each and every member state of the Council of Europe, but also on the leadership in streamlining our joint activities. Armenia, as a nation, whose European identity has been defined and shaped by common values, ideals and heritage, confidently takes this responsibility.

Our Chairmanship priorities have been defined in response to the challenges that member states of the Council of Europe are facing today, with specific focus on issues, which we consider the most pertinent and require immediate action. We will endeavor to bring our contribution also to strengthening the capabilities of the Council of Europe in addressing those challenges.

We will also ensure the continuity of efforts in areas identified as shared priorities of three successive Chairmanships – Andorran, Armenian and Austrian.

We will continue supporting the ongoing reform process of the Council of Europe, initiated by the Secretary General, as we believe that this is the right way to raise the effectiveness and responsiveness of the Organisation.

The Armenian Chairmanship will pursue the goals of combating racism and xenophobia in Europe, of promoting European values through intercultural dialogue, of strengthening European standards on human rights and on the rule of law, of fostering democratic societies and of reinforcing the role of the Council of Europe in the European architecture.

Mr. Chairman

Intolerance and xenophobia violate human dignity and challenge the cohesion of our societies. We would like to focus our attention on the hatred and intolerance, racist and xenophobic rhetoric used in political discourse as a tool for political propaganda, which contaminates the souls of the people, incites distrust and creates images of public enemies and leads to hate-induced crimes. The Armenian Chairmanship will contribute to the efforts by organizing a High-Level Conference on Combating Racism and Xenophobia and Intolerance in Europe.

The Armenian Chairmanship will also support the activities within the framework of the No Hate Speech Movement, as we consider the Youth project on combating the hate speech on-line as a timely response to these threats.

Promoting intercultural dialogue is an effective tool for forging greater understanding in European societies. Diversity is the strength and richness of Europe and we should spare no efforts towards maintaining and preserving our distinct cultural heritage. The Armenian Chairmanship will host the 2013 Exchange of the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue.

The setting of standards for the human rights and the rule of law is the area of excellence of the Council of Europe. The strengthening of application of the European Convention on Human Rights, especially at national level is a necessary precondition for securing the rights and freedoms of all individuals.

To further reflect on the European standards on the rule of law, in continuation of the efforts of the UK Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, in the framework of the Armenian Chairmanship, the Constitutional Court of Armenia will organise a Conference in Yerevan. It will focus on the role of public administration, notably, the scope and the limits of the States powers' discretion in designing, implementing and interpreting laws.

Local democracy has been a priority area for a number of previous Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers and we will continue their efforts in this regard, as we firmly believe that local democracy is a crucial element for the democratic advancement of the society. We will focus mainly on the aspect of citizens' participation and the ways to increase that participation in the decision-making process on matters of local and regional concerns. This issue will be addressed in detail during the conference, which will provide an opportunity to reflect upon all the relevant aspects in order to draw a comprehensive picture, in particular, with regards the best practices, as well as on policies applied in member states of the Council of Europe.

The Armenian Chairmanship will also pay special attention to the problems of the capital cities and their role in overall development of local democracy, given their weight and influence in political, economic, social and cultural life.

Education will also remain within the focus of the Armenian Chairmanship and we will contribute to the cooperation and policy dialogue in the field of higher education. The Council of Europe has carried out important work in support of the implementation of the Bologna Process, which is currently led by Armenia. Although tangible results have been achieved, nevertheless, there is a need to consolidate the implementation and to further build on the progress achieved.

Armenia will also pay special attention to the area of education for democratic citizenship and youth participation. In this regard we will organize a Youth Policy Symposium in Yerevan, which will serve as a platform for exchange of views and in-depth discussion on youth participation.

The Armenian Chairmanship attaches great importance to the cultural dimension of the Council of Europe activities aimed at raising awareness of European citizens about rich and diverse cultural heritage of Europe.

Armenia will also contribute to furthering the Council of Europe's cooperation with other international and regional organisations. Such cooperation is essential for better synergies of activities, for an enhanced effectiveness and impact of efforts. In this regard, we will closely follow the process of accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights, which will further strengthen the protection of human rights and will contribute to the creation of a single European legal space.

One of the main partners of the Council of Europe in its efforts to promote respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy remains the OSCE and the level of cooperation between the two organisations with a regular pattern of consultations and high-level meetings, is yet another evidence of that. Since 2004, co-operation has been enhanced in particular in the fields of protection of

the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, fight against terrorism, fight against trafficking in human beings and promotion of tolerance. The Council of Europe and the OSCE have established close co-operation in number of areas, such as freedom of the media and elections related activities such as the observation of elections. Co-operation between the two organisations is developing also on the ground in some member states where both have field presence.

At the same time, there is a common understanding, that we should encourage the two organizations to enhance this co-operation, to exchange information and to coordinate their activities with a view of developing synergies and avoiding duplication.

The Armenian chairmanship will spear no efforts to further promote targeted and result oriented cooperation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

Thank you.