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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 955th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 June 2013

**In response to the address by Mr. Edward Nalbandian,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We warmly welcome Mr. Edward Agvanovich Nalbandian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, a country with which we enjoy friendly relations and with which Russia is developing a strategic partnership and alliance and expanding co-operation in commercial, economic and humanitarian matters.

We have listened with great interest to the priorities you have outlined for the Armenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. In many respects we share the goals that Armenia has set for that organization.

We support your intention to fight racism and xenophobia in Europe. In that connection, we agree that it is important to organize a high-level conference on combating these problems. We believe that one of the key items on its agenda should be countering manifestations of neo-Nazism and attempts to glorify Nazism and falsify history. Of equal importance is the discussion at such a conference of problems regarding discrimination against so-called non-citizens in a number of Council of Europe countries.

We welcome the Armenian Chairmanship's intention to promote European values through intercultural dialogue. This topic is extremely relevant for Europe in the interests of maintaining inter-ethnic and interreligious relations and respect for traditional spiritual and moral values. We therefore support Armenia's plans to hold the next annual meeting on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue.

Your goal of strengthening the role of the Council of Europe in European affairs is also something that impresses us. This is entirely in keeping with our vision of that organization as one of the key structures capable of making a tangible contribution to the development of a greater Europe without dividing lines. This position was confirmed during the recent visit to Russia by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, who met with President Putin and the Minister for Foreign Affairs,

Mr. Sergey Lavrov. Russia emphasized the need to ensure the unity of the legal space for the entire European continent and the importance of using specialized Council of Europe conventions to strengthen social peace and cohesion at a time of financial crisis. It is our hope that these questions will also be considered by the Armenian Chairmanship.

We share your desire to strengthen the Council of Europe's co-operation with other international and regional organizations, including the OSCE. In that connection, we believe it necessary to focus our collective efforts on building a common and indivisible security area, based, among other things, on shared humanitarian support. It is important above all to focus on co-operation in the four priority areas of co-operation with the OSCE identified at the Council of Europe summit in 2005: combating terrorism and trafficking in human beings, protecting national minorities, and the problems of tolerance and non-discrimination. There are quite a number of unresolved problems in these areas. We should also continue to improve co-operation in countering terrorism and in fighting organized crime and illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs. Greater attention should be paid to countering trafficking, including trafficking in human organs, tissues and cells. Co-ordinated efforts are required to deal with the problems of ensuring the rights of national minorities in a number of European countries in terms of the exercise of their socio-economic and political rights, including participation in electoral processes. We also hope that the Council of Europe together with the OSCE will increase the attention paid to freedom of movement and human contacts by eliminating the "visa barriers" that still remain in Europe.

All in all, we are confident that the Armenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will make a substantial contribution to strengthening the Council of Europe as an independent and universal European organization ensuring the unity of the continent's legal and humanitarian space. We wish you, Edward Agvanovich, every success in your endeavours.

Thank you for your attention.