



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference

Response to questions from Trend News Agency

1 July 2010

What measures are going to be taken to prevent further possible incidents?

This is a major challenge for those responsible and a question to which each must offer their own answer. In general, the cease-fire holds only as a result of political will.

My own views are shaped by the monitoring exercises that my team of 5 staff and I conduct, with the support and assistance of the relevant military authorities, local commanders and those under their command. These monitoring exercises are not intended as investigations; this would require the consent of and co-operation between the sides, as well as a wider mandate and more resources for my office. Nor are they supposed to be a peacekeeping measure. Nonetheless, they provide a vital 'snapshot', an effective and consistent way of assessing the situation on the ground, and a rare opportunity to lower tensions. In practice, about twice a month we go to the front line, either on the border or the line of contact, to obtain first-hand information and subsequently report to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, the Minsk Group Co-chairs and participating States, with recommendations for any appropriate action.

Undoubtedly, the very presence of large numbers of armed service personnel facing each other year after year, often in very harsh environments, across short – in some cases very short – distances is the single biggest contributing factor to cease-fire violations. Local commanders on both sides have highlighted a number of other, specific factors which contribute to such incidents. These include shooting from small arms or light weapons, especially by snipers; and any other activity that may be interpreted by the other side as an attempt to improve its positions or as a threat to the security of that side.

In your opinion, how might the recent armed incidents between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces impact on the negotiation process?

The incident of 18-19 June was the most serious cease-fire violation for more than two years. Its impact has been, in the first instance, on the lives of those who have been killed or wounded and of their family members and friends. I have no doubt that all involved in the negotiation process, including the OSCE Minsk Group, the presidents of both Armenia and Azerbaijan and their ministers, understand this. Their families and friends can reasonably expect that the senseless waste of life will galvanise all involved to make the very most of the opportunities presented over the next few weeks to move forward. The Co-chairs of the Minsk Group will be visiting the region from 1-5 July in order to support the sides in preparation for a meeting of

foreign ministers in Almaty later in July. Following their recent meeting at the G8 Summit in Muskoka, the presidents of the co-chair countries have certainly sent an unambiguous message of encouragement to Presidents Aliyev and Sarkisian to take the next step and complete the work on the Basic Principles to enable the drafting of a peace agreement to begin.