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

**Statement**

**in Response to the Secretary General's Update on Open Mandate Questions  
delivered by Permanent Delegation of Armenia at the 1133rd Meeting of the  
OSCE Permanent Council**

February 9, 2017

Mr. Chairperson,

We would like to thank the Secretary General for this update and his efforts which have been presented here.

From the very beginning Armenia approached the issue of extension of the OSCE Office in Yerevan in good faith. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the participating state, which has been blocking the relevant draft decision.

We have been also very open and shared our concerns in this regard. In our previous statements we made an assessment, which is useful to recall here. We stressed that humanitarian demining program of the Office is just a pretext for Azerbaijan to attack the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Now, when the issue of humanitarian demining program is addressed, and Azerbaijan continues to block the extension of the Office, our concerns are clearly validated.

Armenia is a hosting country for the Office, and in this capacity Armenia entrusted the German and Austrian Chairmanships to represent the OSCE on the issue of the extension and agreed with the assessment and proposal made by the Chairmanships in this regard. We showed our firm commitment in defending OSCE presence in our country but also our flexibility to enable the Chairmanship to ensure continued full-fledged presence of the OSCE. We did our utmost, and we will not embark on the road paved by endless blackmailing of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has already indicated its intention to further hinder the work of the Office with regard to other programmatic activities, and thus we should not provide any conducive framework to that end.

The assessment of both German and Austrian Chairmanships is clear-cut. The Office did not violate its mandate by engaging in humanitarian demining activities, and Azerbaijan cannot assume the role of the supreme judge in this Organization by whose verdicts OSCE offices should live or die.

By blocking the extension of the Office in Yerevan Azerbaijan should bear full responsibility for eliminating OSCE presence in the South Caucasus and pay political price for challenging assets of this Organization.

It is true that this issue was created by the conflict perceptions of Azerbaijan. It is also true that if the Organization considers the extension of mandate as bilateral issue of two conflicting participating states there are no chances for continued activities of Yerevan Office. Thus any call for two countries to arrive to acceptable solution entails outdated but also dismissive, washing hands approach. The Office belongs to the OSCE and if the Organization is willing, then Armenia will be pleased to continue hosting its Office.

Thank You.