

**Statement delivered by H.E. Artak Apitonian,
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia
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Mister Chairman,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my appreciation to our keynote speakers for their thought-provoking contributions. Identification of outstanding challenges always matters with the view of turning them into opportunities for a meaningful dialogue.

I also would like to thank the Albanian Chairmanship for choosing a very relevant theme for our discussions - "Building Stability Through Dialogue." This theme is of utmost importance especially at this particular time of uncertainty and unpredictability that we are facing in world politics. Dialogue, co-operation and multilateralism are the only way to a safer future. This necessitates a reinforced emphasis on the capacity of multilateral institutions to deliver adequate responses. Lack of genuine dialogue resulting in erosion of trust and confidence among stakeholders shake the foundation of the European security architecture, and threaten the concept of comprehensive and indivisible security on which this organisation is based upon. It requires joint and decisive action to rebuild trust and resilience towards challenges that we are all facing, starting from fighting COVID-19 pandemic to revitalisation of arms control regimes. Being cognisant of diverging views and approaches we are looking forward to having interesting and target oriented discussion, where reflections and deliberations will concentrate on our joint commitments and offer a way forward.

Mister Chairman,

This year we mark the 45th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. In 1975, 35 states agreed to a set of principles - the so-called Decalogue - which would guide the interstate relations in the OSCE area. Since then the OSCE family has grown considerably. This has been possible first and foremost through the application of the principle of self-determination of peoples. However, recently we are witnessing a trend of continuously diminishing and downgrading the significance of the principle of self-determination, attempts to artificially create an order of hierarchy among the principles. This is a worrying sign, since we believe that the purpose of the founding states of what is today an OSCE was to develop a comprehensive structure that would enhance the confidence among its participants thus reducing the chances of tensions, crises and conflicts. We should also keep in mind that the principles of the Helsinki Final Act are derived from the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and any interpretation of those should be based on the respective documents and decisions by the UN and its bodies.

Let me also stress that the recommitment of the OSCE participating States to the principles of Helsinki Final Act without selective approach and artificial hierarchy will serve the purpose of common and indivisible security.

Mister Chairman,

Dialogue is also essential in settlement of crises and conflicts. Absence of or unwillingness to engage in a meaningful dialogue also results in erosion of trust and confidence, and contributes to protracting conflicts that we have in the OSCE area. Moreover, in certain cases we see that a certain participating State instead opt for a use or threat of use of force thus further destabilising the situation and deepening the divide and mistrust. This in its turn challenges the concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. Peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts is another commitment that all participating States entered into upon their accession to the OSCE. Lack of political will and genuine commitment to peaceful resolution of conflicts is one of the main stumbling blocks in the context of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh remain fully committed to the letter and spirit of the 1994 trilateral ceasefire agreement which does not have time limitations, we both denounce the use of force and work on creating an environment conducive to peace. Recent exchange of journalists between the three parties to the conflict is a good illustration of confidence building measures, a small step which may create opportunities to reduce tensions and prepare populations for peace. However, continuous and repetitive state-level bellicose rhetoric, territorial claims, historical revisionism from one party to the conflict make the possibility of reaching settlement of the conflict even more remote. Such a stance certainly does not help to establish a much needed dialogue among the stakeholders and stability in the region, which the OSCE has always been advocating for.

Mister Chairman,

Armenia was among the first countries that supported the appeal of the UN Secretary General António Guterres for immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the globe in support of the bigger battle against COVID-19. We also welcomed the statement made by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs calling for utmost restraint and refraining from any action that could aggravate the situation in the conflict area, bearing in mind the limitations for exercising monitoring activities due to the situation with COVID-19. Unfortunately, we have to state that neither the call by the UN Secretary General nor the statement by the Co-Chairs were sufficient grounds for a certain State in our region to behave in a responsible manner, and we continue to witness the blatant violations of the established ceasefire, including attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Moreover, large scale military exercises in clear violation of the Vienna document provisions were being conducted, thus further exacerbating the fragile situation on the ground. This brings us to the necessity that the monitoring activities should be reinforced and not be disrupted under any circumstances particularly during such crises as COVID19 pandemics.

Mister Chairman,

I would like to end my statement by stressing that we are bound together to advance security and peace in the OSCE area. Armenia remains faithful to its obligations and commitments related to political-military dimension. We will continue to be actively involved in all efforts aimed at building stability and trust in the OSCE area.

I thank you Mister Chairman.