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

Statement

**in response to the Address of H.E. Sebastian Kurz, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office,
Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria
delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1127th Special Meeting of
the OSCE Permanent Council**

January 12, 2017

Mr. Chairman,

We warmly welcome H.E. Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive address.

Mr. Minister,

During your previous appearance at the Permanent Council the delegation of Armenia took the opportunity to present its approaches on the priorities of the 2017 Austrian Chairmanship and express its support to its forward-looking but also realistic programme. Therefore, we will share some remarks on key points of your thoughtful address.

Austria is assuming the Chairmanship in a very complex environment of a number of persisting and evolving challenges. Among several outstanding issues, which Austria inherited is the challenge of the consistent erosion of the OSCE toolbox, including such valuable mechanisms as field operations. Regrettably the long-standing policy of Azerbaijan to reduce OSCE field presence in the region of South Caucasus, gained even more consistency last year in an unprecedented attempt of imposing pressure and dictate on the Chairmanship, the Office and the host country through using technical decision on extension of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. We need very strong leadership of the Austrian Chairmanship in protecting the OSCE presence in the South Caucasus in line with the OSCE procedures and practice, which will effectively prevent further unconstructive stance of hostage taking.

Mr. Minister,

We appreciate the Chairmanship's resolve to prevent further escalation of the NK conflict by working through the agreed format of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship. The large scale military offensive of Azerbaijan against the people of

Nagorno-Karabakh, accompanied by atrocities and other violations of international humanitarian law in April last year demonstrated one more time that use of force and military buildup do not solve, but deepen conflicts and eventually undermine decades of efforts of the international mediators and other parties to the NK conflict to achieve durable peace.

Another lesson of the April large-scale offensive is the imperative of strengthening the capacities of the PRCiO as the OSCE permanent presence in the conflict zone and introduction of investigative mechanism into ceasefire violations. Regrettably, agreements in this regard achieved at the Vienna and St-Petersburg summits last year, still have not been finalized and implemented due to rejection of one participating State. Armenia along with 55 OSCE participating States supported the German Chairmanship's proposal on enhancing the PRCiO capacities. Full adherence to ceasefire regime, established by the 1994 and 1995 tripartite agreements, through strengthening OSCE's monitoring, investigative and verification capacities along the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan is vital for the advancement of peace process. We encourage the Austrian Chairmanship to continue the efforts aimed at full implementation of the above mentioned agreements.

Mr. Minister,

We fully endorse the view of the Austrian Chairmanship that safety and security of conflict affected population should be a priority. Human, economic and cultural rights of millions of people, residing in conflict areas throughout the OSCE region, including their right to life are constantly being violated. This significant portion of the OSCE population remains excluded from the OSCE activities, including those aimed at promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We hope the Austrian Chairmanship will address this problem also by presenting inclusive human dimension programme, which will provide opportunity to discuss human rights of people residing in conflict areas, as the category of population, most suffering of the conflict.

We fully endorse the approach of the Austrian Chairmanship on the need to apply the OSCE wide toolbox to promoting de-escalation, reestablishing trust and countering violent extremism and radicalization. Indeed, our Organization is a forum for addressing outstanding issues of European security through dialogue, cooperation and confidence building on the basis of its values, norms and principles, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act.

Mr. Minister,

Throughout recent years we have adopted very important documents aimed at countering phenomenon of the foreign terrorist fighters and violent extremism. In Hamburg we have condemned numerous atrocities targeting religious communities by

terrorist entities such as ISIL, ANF and other Al-Qaida affiliates. Unfortunately, the incitement to violence, war and genocide had not been exclusively limited to terrorists, and atrocities perpetrated and glorified in the OSCE region that I have already referred to, should be taken as serious warning sign. The events in the OSCE neighboring regions suggested that the radicalization of youth and advocacy of violent extremism and hatred cannot be contained in the officially designated image of enemy and eventually they can explode the entire societies. That being said, let me underline that Armenia strongly supports the Chairmanship's priority on countering violent extremism and radicalization with focus on youth.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the outgoing German Chairmanship and to wish all success to you, Mr. Minister, to the Chairman of the Permanent Council Ambassador Koja and to the Austrian able and competent team.

Thank you.