



ԵԱՀԿ-ՈՒՄ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄՇՏԱԿԱՆ ՆԵՐԿԱՅԱՑՈՒՑՉՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement
in response to the address by the Chair
of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe,
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, H.E. Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova
as delivered by the Delegation of Armenia
at the 1353th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

3 February 2022

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, H.E. Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova, in his capacity as the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and thanks him for his informative presentation.

Distinguished Minister,

The Republic of Armenia supports the efforts of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and concur with your urging the states to “rediscover the very essence of their commitment to protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law” in line with their accession commitments. It is our strong belief that failure of a state to deliver on its commitments, or worse, to deliberately act in contradiction and violation of its commitments, especially those related to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, should have consequences for the perpetrator. Otherwise we should be prepared for the total erosion of the European security architecture. Such signs are already visible today.

As a strong advocate of co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe, Armenia encourages further enhancement of this co-operation based on the comparative advantages of the two Organizations and the created synergies. The OSCE as the largest security organization with its concept of comprehensive and indivisible security, and the Council of Europe as the most prominent human rights watchdog with its set of legally binding conventions, mechanisms, and above all the European Court of Human Rights are well positioned to complement and mutually reinforce each other. We are convinced that the security of our region is inextricably linked to our ability to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Therefore, we should explore ways to further expand the areas of co-operation between the two Organizations with the aim of strengthening the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as means to enhance security in the OSCE area of responsibility.

The full and unconditional execution of judgements of the European Court of Human Rights should not be seen as a matter of goodwill, but rather an obligation. Therefore, the refusal by Azerbaijan to disclose the real number of illegally held Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives, as well as the places of their detention, is not only a violation of the provisions of the international humanitarian law but also a failure to comply with the interim measures of the European Court of Human Rights. Moreover, Azerbaijan refuses to acknowledge their detention despite the existence of numerous video, photo and other material testifying to the fact of their captivity.

Excellency,

It is beyond any doubt that by virtue of its deep respect for cultural diversity and commitment to the protection and preservation of the world's cultural heritage, Italy has earned a well-deserved reputation as a "cultural superpower". Therefore, the priority given to the protection of cultural heritage as an outstanding tool for dialogue and social inclusion is commendable.

Unfortunately, the topic of destruction of cultural heritage continues to remain a serious concern, especially in the context of conflicts and armed aggressions. After the war of aggression waged by Azerbaijan against Artsakh and its people, thousands of objects and sites of Armenian cultural heritage fell under the control of Azerbaijan. Given the practice of systematic destruction and appropriation of Armenian cultural heritage in Azerbaijan over the past decades, there are serious concerns about the fate of the numerous historical and religious monuments, archeological sites and museum exhibits in the recently occupied territories. The Azerbaijani government uses two main methods to get rid of the Armenian cultural heritage and historical presence in Nagorno-Karabakh – physical destruction and misappropriation or alteration of the identity of historical sites. There are many alarming reports coming these days, and we draw the attention of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Europe to this policy of vandalism and misappropriation of the Armenian cultural heritage.

Distinguished Minister,

It is often stated that there should be no "grey zones" when it comes to enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Protection of human rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights should, without exceptions, cover the entire area of responsibility of the Organisation. In this regard, the Council of Europe with its monitoring bodies, as well as international humanitarian organisations should have full and unhindered access to Nagorno-Karabakh to carry out their mandated work.

In closing, Your Excellency, let me reiterate Armenia's full support for the efforts of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Europe to promote and protect the values of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law throughout the area of the Council of Europe.

Thank you.