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PERMANENT MISSION OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF  
ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

**Statement  
in response to the Reports by the three Personal Representatives  
of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination  
as delivered by Ambassador Andranik Hovhannisyan  
at the 1502<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

*12 December 2024*

The Delegation of Armenia welcomes to the Permanent Council the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination on Combating Anti-Semitism, Rabbi Andrew Baker, the Personal Representative of the OSCE CiO on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims Ambassador Evren Dağdelen Akgün and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, Professor Regina Polak. We take note of the reports and would like to make the following reflections.

Madam Chair,

Discrimination and intolerance undermine justice and equality, which form the cornerstones of human rights. These practices not only erode the principles of dignity but also create systemic barriers that marginalize individuals or groups based on their race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion thus undermining the development of inclusive and cohesive societies.

It is with this understanding that Armenia stands resolute in its unwavering commitment to protecting and advancing the dignity and human rights of all individuals both at national and international levels. At the national level, Armenia has demonstrated its commitment to eradicating intolerance and discriminatory practices through the implementation of substantial legislative reforms. The recent amendments to the Criminal Code, incorporating provisions on anti-discrimination and hate crimes, mark a significant advancement in promoting equality and safeguarding vulnerable groups.

Guided by its strong commitment to the universality of human rights Armenia integrates the minority rights into the broader framework of democratization. We are pleased to note that in 2021, Armenia established a National Minorities Day in its official list of holidays. At international level Armenia promotes human rights through regular reporting to the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Two weeks ago, the latter considered Armenia's report and commended, in particular, our National Human Rights Strategy.

By such international engagements, Armenia monitors anti-discrimination measures and ensures accountability. Armenia's case before the International Court of Justice under the CERD Convention further highlights its commitment to addressing systemic injustices and safeguarding the rights and dignity of all individuals.

Madam Chair,

As a nation located on the crossroad of different civilizations with ages-old traditions of mutually enriching interaction with different nations and cultures Armenia has consistently demonstrated its readiness to collaborate with international partners and to invest in international efforts to promote tolerance, intercultural dialogue and combat discrimination and hate speech. Armenia boasts of having not only one of the oldest churches, but also magnificent mosques and mausoleums, synagogue, and the largest Yazidi temple in the world. Armenian communities have thrived in a number of Muslim majority states and continue to constitute one of the unique pieces of multi-religious and multi-cultural tapestry of the Middle East.

At the same time, Armenians have first-hand knowledge on the consequences of intolerance, hatred and discrimination. The history bears witness to numerous instances where gross violations of human rights, when left unaddressed, escalated into the systematic targeting and ultimate extermination of people.

Madam Chair,

We concur with Professor Polak that our Organization has found itself in a continuous state of multiple crises which threaten peace, security, stability and democracy in the OSCE states.

Against the backdrop of the current geopolitical and security crisis we are deeply alarmed by the increase of hate crimes and religious intolerance in conflict situations. Despite widespread condemnation, it continues to be used as a weapon of war and a tool of political oppression. As conflicts proliferate, humanitarian crises deepen the manifestations of intolerance, discrimination, and hatred continue to inflict immeasurable harm. These acts of violence often are used to target entire ethnic and religious communities or ethnic groups, with the ultimate aim to forcibly displace them and erase their identities.

Efforts must be intensified to address the destruction and damage inflicted upon religious sites targeted in conflict situations driven by hatred and intolerance. Such attacks often aim to wipe out the traces of indigenous religious groups and support the revisionism of history. The destruction and misappropriation of these sites constitute a violation of fundamental human rights, including the right to freedom of religion and belief, the right to access and enjoy cultural

and religious heritage, and the rights of protection of places of worship. The loss of what we commonly refer to as the “shared heritage of humanity” affects everyone, but for local communities it also means denial of their identity, their beliefs, their history and their dignity. Conflict prevention and rehabilitation efforts must fully consider these impacts, as acts of religious intolerance can perpetuate cycles of violence and hinder reconciliation. They can also serve as early warning signs of looming atrocities ahead.

In closing, we would like to call upon the distinguished Personal representatives in delivering their mandates and addressing specific cases of intolerance to leave "no one behind" and ensure that there are no "grey zones", when it comes to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you.