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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement on deadly ambush carried out by Azerbaijani subversive group against police officers of Nagorno-Karabakh in violation of Trilateral Statement of November 2020 as delivered by Ms. Lilit Grigoryan, Deputy Head of Mission at the 1414th meeting of the Permanent Council

09 March, 2023

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Armenia raises this current issue to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the recent development in Nagorno-Karabakh and brief on details of the ambush carried out by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces resulting in casualties.

On 5 March at about 10:00 am local time a sabotage group of the Azerbaijani armed forces crossed the line of contact and attacked a vehicle of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) carrying officers of the Passport and Visa Department of the Police. As a result of this attack, three police officers were killed, and one was wounded.

This was a pre-planned provocation, no doubt carried out upon instructions of the leadership of Azerbaijan, which is proved by Azerbaijani actions preceding the 5 March attack.

On 28 February Azerbaijani armed forces opened fire on a resident of the village of Myurishen, of Martuni region of Artsakh, who was carrying out agricultural work. On 2 March and on the night of 3 March, the ceasefire was violated by the Azerbaijani military stationed on the territories of Askeran, Martakert and Martuni regions, which came under Azerbaijani control after the 2020 war of aggression.

Two days before the ambush by the sniper fire of Azerbaijani Armed forces a number of surveillance cameras installed by the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities on the line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan were damaged. The video footage showing this was disseminated by Azerbaijan's state news agencies.

However, not all cameras were damaged and the remaining cameras captured how Azerbaijani sabotage group crossed the Line of Contact and ambushed the Police car.

In particular, the videos that Nagorno-Karabakh Police has at its disposal proves that the Azerbaijani military attacked the "UAZ" type service car that carried four employees of the Police of Nagorno-Karabakh Ministry of Internal Affairs, who were on their way from Stepanakert to Hin Shen and Mets Shen villages of Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, the videos prove that there was nothing in the car except the official documents.

Since this ambush occurred in the zone of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, around 30 minutes after, they arrived at the scene of the ambush and helped to evacuate the wounded serviceman to the hospital. Later on, the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh issued an information bulletin which confirmed the violation by Azerbaijan of the 9 November Statement.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia in its statement on 5 March, which we have circulated on 5 March, stated that the actions of the Azerbaijani forces cannot be described as anything other than terrorism. And I also would like to particularly emphasise that the ambush was carried out against a non-military target, immediately after the talks on unblocking the Lachin Corridor held between representatives of Artsakh and Azerbaijan on 1 March.

After the deadly ambush, Azerbaijan, as usual, attempted to justify its provocation by spreading disinformation alleging that they received reports that weapons, ammunition and personnel were being transferred from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh and they acted on these.

No evidence was presented to substantiate these absurd claims and allegations aside from some video showing some unidentified car moving on some unidentified road. Azerbaijan has not presented and cannot present any fact and justification supporting their version of events, simply because there isn't any. Moreover, my Delegation will circulate the video¹ published by the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities which prove the invalidity of the version put forward by Azerbaijan.

As a matter of fact, Azerbaijan occasionally resorts to the use of force in order to terrorise and impose one-sided maximalist solutions, and such repeated incidents and attacks prove that any sustainable dialogue between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh could be only within a viable international mechanism.

Mr. Chairperson,

On 7 March, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan disseminated yet another disinformation aimed at misleading the international community, this time alleging that on the same day, a column of military vehicles of the Armed Forces of Armenia, accompanied by the Russian peacekeepers, passed along the Stepanakert-Ghaibalishen-Lisagor road, which is part of the Lachin Corridor, and that the personnel of Armed Forces of Armenia were transported along the same road.

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https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YIUNlu5o5trahXtqxpdwagmz_8xYUoKM/view?fbclid=IwAR040xV3vJ0wHeeT4FcHGHJMVmHvHzpiulaCYeZOKiXiSYPxp-FCY36KDoc

The Ministry of Defense of Armenia immediately rejected all the allegations, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia yesterday issued a statement on the disinformation spread by Azerbaijan, which will be circulated shortly.

Armenia has repeatedly stated that no munitions or goods of military significance were transported through the Lachin corridor, which I shall remind, is blocked by Azerbaijan since December 12, 2022. And I would like to once again state and emphasise that the Republic of Armenia does not have an army in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Furthermore, Armenia repeatedly proposed to send an international fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh to verify the claims and allegations of Azerbaijan, and this proposal was repeatedly rejected by the highest leadership of Azerbaijan itself.

Armenia still believes that such a fact-finding mission will be instrumental to dispel the unsubstantiated allegations and accusations of Azerbaijan and will help to create a conducive environment for establishing a minimum degree of trust among parties.

Mr. Chairperson,

With such "scandalous revelations," Azerbaijan is trying to divert the attention of the international community not only from the terrorist act carried out by the Azerbaijani armed forces on 5 March, but also from the fact of not fulfilling its obligations on the Lachin corridor undertaken by the trilateral statement of 9 November, 2020 as well as its international legal obligations to implement the 22 February Order of the International Court of Justice, of which we talked during the last PC meeting.

This morning the MoD of Azerbaijan again spread fake news claiming that units of Armenia targeted Azerbaijani combat positions located in the Eastern part of Armenia-Azerbaijan border zone. Furthermore, the MoD of Azerbaijan also claims that the Defence Army of Artsakh violated the cease-fire regime. All these baseless claims have been rejected by Armenia and Artsakh.

This combination of military escalation and disinformation is the already well known and familiar pattern of actions, the modus operandi of Azerbaijan aimed to prepare ground for a new aggression not only against Nagorno-Karabakh, but also the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Chairperson,

The recent violence clearly shows the inability or the lack of political will in Azerbaijan to move towards peace. On the contrary, Azerbaijan occasionally resorts to the use of force in order to terrorise and impose one-sided maximalist solutions.

The continued blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan, in violation of the legally binding Order of the International Court of Justice is aimed at inflicting on the people of Nagorno-Karabakh conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part or to achieve its forced displacement which is a crime punishable under the international law.

Azerbaijani leadership openly declares its goal of forcefully subjugating the people of Nagorno-Karabakh or pressuring them to leave. This is a creeping ethnic cleansing in making.

The infiltration of the Azerbaijani sabotage group into the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh on March 5 and the attack on police officers is a gross violation of the cease-fire regime established by the Trilateral Statement of 9 November 2020. The mentioned actions of Azerbaijan are the practical denial of Baku's sincerity regarding the establishment of peace and stability in the region.

And it once again shows the urgent need for guarantees for ensuring the rights and security of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and international involvement. Therefore, once again I have to repeat that under current circumstances, sending an international fact-finding mission to the Lachin corridor and Nagorno-Karabakh becomes a vital necessity.

Armenia has repeatedly announced its readiness for constructive and result oriented dialogue in an environment free from hate speech, preconditions and warmongering rhetoric, for the sake of sustainable peace and development in the South Caucasus. I kindly ask to attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

I thank you.