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

Statement

On the Escalation of Situation along the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and the Armenia-Azerbaijan border delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1070th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

October 8, 2015

Mr. Chairman,

We took note of the statement made by distinguished representative of France on behalf of the Minsk Group co-Chair countries.

We would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the Note Verbale of the Permanent Delegation of Armenia, dated September 28, in regard to the recent escalation of situation along the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia-Azerbaijan state border.

The last escalation introduced new alarming trends. First, it was characterized with high the number of casualties among both civilian and militaries. Three Armenian civilians from two borderline settlements of Armenia were killed by Azerbaijani armed forces which shelled borderline villages from mortar launchers. All killed civilians were women, two of them elderly. They were killed in their own houses and farms, far from military positions.

Second, Azerbaijani armed forces shelled the military infrastructure of Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army located five km away from the Line of Contact using 120 mm. mortars, 107 mm. rockets and 122 mm. D-30 howitzers. The latter was used for the first time since signing of the ceasefire agreement in 1994. The heavy shelling resulted in 4 casualties and 16 wounded of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army.

Killing civilians in borderline territory and shelling military infrastructures far away from the Line of Contact indicate that Azerbaijan has deliberately chosen to escalate situation into new a stage of confrontation.

The intentional targeting of civilians along with systematic torture and killings of the civilians from borderline territory of Armenia under the Azerbaijani custody may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity and these crimes should not go

unpunished. We call on participating states to condemn in strongest terms the crimes perpetrated against civilians.

It should be stressed that the timing of this deliberate escalation is certainly not accidental. We strongly condemn the recent ceasefire violation by Azerbaijan, which has developed an ill practice of escalating the situation, even at the expense of human casualties ahead of important visits to the region and high level meetings, thus undermining the meetings and impeding the negotiation process and this yet another provocation by Azerbaijan came as a response to the expectation, expressed by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs on holding productive talks between Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in New York.

We agree that the introduction of the investigative mechanism to cease-fire violations is essential in maintaining ceasefire and stopping blame game. Indeed, Armenia has agreed to introduce an investigative mechanism while Azerbaijan consistently refused to do so. This fact, which is acknowledged by the Co-chairs of the Minsk Group themselves in their last press releases of September 26th, clearly indicates who is interested both in cease-fire violations and blame game.

The consistent efforts of Azerbaijani side to downsize the presence of the PRCiO Office on which my delegation made a point earlier today also fits into overall policy of Azerbaijan to prevent consolidation of ceasefire.

It is apparent that when Baku is interested in ceasefire, as it was the case during European games, held in that country, Azerbaijani armed forces are able to maintain it quite efficiently. The data on ceasefire violations before, during and after this event is very illustrative in this regard. This fact makes absolutely clear which party initiates ceasefire violations.

We firmly believe that process of political settlement of the conflict requires a conducive atmosphere on the ground. To reach fair, lasting and negotiated peace, we urgently need to consolidate the ceasefire and put an end to human casualties.

Thank You.