



**Statement**

**In Reply to Director of the ODIHR Michael Georg Link  
delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1115th Meeting of the OSCE  
Permanent Council  
October 13, 2016**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to join the other speakers and thank the distinguished Director Michael Georg Link for presenting the outcomes of this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

Armenia values the HDIM as an important platform for inclusive and civilized dialogue between representatives of participating States, civil society and academia. Our participation in the HDIM at the level of Minister was indicative of our interest in that meeting.

The Delegation of Armenia engaged in open debate on current challenges in the sphere of human rights, our achievements and best practices in upholding OSCE commitments. We did not shy away to address our own shortcomings and outstanding issues.

The discussions once again clearly established the fact that security and stability in the OSCE area is closely interlinked with upholding of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all. Participants of the HDIM agreed that gross violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms may further fuel conflicts. We were outspoken on the need to streamline the efforts of our Organization and its institutions to promote individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people residing in conflict areas.

We took note of the statement of the representative of Azerbaijan and in this regard would like to stress the following.

We regret that Azerbaijan restricted participation of its independent civil society, and opted to engage in fake dialogue with its GONGOs. This is disrespectful towards all of us who value the HDIM as one of the most inclusive platform for human rights dialogue.

Azerbaijan is attempting to promote its domestic ill-practice of silencing of dissenting voices from other parts of the OSCE including Nagorno-Karabakh, which is unacceptable and should be clearly condemned. Harassment and dehumanization of the representative of the civil society of NK in the course of the forum fully fits into its official policy of hatred and intolerance towards Armenians in general and people of NK in particular.

HDIM is a platform of a dialogue free of censorship and prosecution, and we believe that Azerbaijan should stand for an open and frank dialogue with the civil society, including representatives of civil society of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Taking the opportunity of the presence of Director Link we would like to express our concerns regarding some publications in the Azerbaijani media on the most recent appearance of the ODIHR Director in Baku. We are not aware whether assessment attributing to Mr. Link is correct. Some of those assessments qualify Azerbaijan as an excellent sample of interfaith relations and also present recent constitutional referendum in that country in a very positive light. We think that the ODIHR director has all opportunities to confirm or deny or simply keep silence about his remarks in Baku. But we would like to stress that the ODIHR director became a tool for propaganda despite all our concerns, which were clearly articulated in this Organization.

We are not aware whether this visit met its declared goal of appeasing Azerbaijan and re-engaging it in cooperation with the OSCE and ODIHR, but one thing is clear. Holding an event on TND at the level of Director and creating artificial avenues for presenting nonexistent good practices in a country, which officially pursues policy of promoting intolerance, xenophobia and hate crimes may highly affect credibility and reputation of ODIHR as an institution promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms independently and without political considerations.

Thank You.