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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

**Statement**  
**on "The aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and Armenia**  
**with the direct involvement of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters"**  
**as delivered by the Delegation of Armenia**  
**at the 1374<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council**

*19 May 2022*

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Armenia would like to draw the attention of the participating States to the latest developments in the region that have taken place since we last raised this current issue at the Permanent Council.

First of all, let me inform the Permanent Council that the situation along the borders of Armenia, as well as along the line of contact in Artsakh /Nagorno-Karabakh/ continues to remain tense and volatile.

Over the past weeks, the Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan, in an attempt to cover up its provocations and to mislead the international community, has been regularly spreading disinformation and fake news on alleged shelling of the positions of the Azerbaijani troops by the Armenian armed forces. The latest such statement was made just yesterday.

These statements have been repeatedly refuted by the Ministry of Defense of Armenia. However, knowing the tactics of Azerbaijan and taking into account past experience, there is a high probability that by spreading such disinformation, Azerbaijan, apparently, is preparing the ground for new military provocations and attacks. Therefore, this should serve as an early warning to our partners, primarily the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, the CiO and the relevant OSCE structures, to closely follow the situation in order to prevent a new escalation.

Dear colleagues,

Azerbaijan continues resorting to inflammatory rhetoric and aggressive behaviour, in complete disregard of its international commitments and obligations, and the clear and explicit order of the International Court of Justice to Azerbaijan to take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, adopted on 7 December 2021.

Unfortunately, the lack of a robust and strong response from the CiO, the OSCE institutions and the participating States, emboldens Azerbaijan to continue this aggressive policy and anti-Armenian rhetoric.

Azerbaijan also continues to illegally detain around 40 Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages. Dozens of captives continue to be held in inhuman conditions, and tried in mock trials under the trumped up charges. The fate and whereabouts of around one hundred Armenian prisoners of war and other captives, of which the capture of about 30 Armenians is confirmed by video and other evidence, remain unknown, which puts them at risk of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killing.

In its interim decision of 7 December 2021, the International Court of Justice ordered Azerbaijan to protect all persons captured in the Nagorno-Karabakh armed conflict from violence and bodily harm.

These cases are still awaiting a proper response from the relevant international organizations and partners, including the OSCE. At the same time, we express our gratitude to numerous parliaments, inter parliamentary bodies for a number of resolutions adopted in this regard, and to media and civil society representatives who continued to report and to bring this issue to the attention of the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

Azerbaijan continues to pursue a state-sponsored policy of destruction, desecration and/or misappropriation of the Armenian historical and religious heritage in the occupied territories of Artsakh, in particular in the cities of Shushi and Hadrut. Recently, new such evidence has surfaced on social media, including videos of desecration and vandalism of Armenian monuments.

In particular, the crosses were removed from the dome of the Church of St. John /or Surb Hovhannes/ in the occupied village of Togh and the Church of the Holy Resurrection /Surb Harutyun/ in the occupied city of Hadrut.

In another video, Azerbaijani soldiers demolish and vandalize the Armenian cross-stones/khachkars.

In this context, I would like to once again refer to the interim decision of the ICJ, which ordered Azerbaijan to prevent and punish acts of vandalism against Armenian cultural heritage. We also welcome the latest resolution of the European Parliament, which unequivocally condemned the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage and held Azerbaijan responsible for it.

Excellences,

Azerbaijan continues its irresponsible actions, violating the ceasefire and deliberately exacerbating the existing volatile situation. New provocations and hostile actions are carried out by the Azerbaijani side almost on a daily basis.

In particular, on 5 May, at around 13:00, on the Martakert - Drmbon highway, a truck from an Azerbaijani military convoy deliberately rammed into a taxi carrying two civilians and pushed it into a 12-meter-deep gorge. The driver and the two passengers, representatives of Tumo center for creative technologies, received light injuries.

On 7 May 2022, at around 13:50, the Azerbaijani armed forces opened fire from firearms of different calibers at the Armenian military positions located in the eastern part of the Armenian border, as well as in the direction of the Sotk gold mine. As a result, one civilian sustained a gunshot wound. Despite the numerous facts on the ground, the official Azerbaijani sources hastened to deny this blatant violation, labeling it as a disinformation.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Armenia has declared its policy of bringing an era of peace to our region and we will consistently work in this direction. However, in order to achieve this, first and foremost, there is a need for Azerbaijan to reject and denounce the use of force as a means for the settlement of disputes, as it is required by international law. Another necessary condition is for Azerbaijan to denounce its territorial claims on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia.

Unfortunately, this is still not the case at the moment. In particular, Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Khalaf Khalafov in an interview, while referring to border delimitation and demarcation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, made new baseless territorial claims on so-called "Azerbaijani enclaves", which has no legal grounds.

Such statements, especially in view of possible launching of the border delimitation and demarcation process, would only harm any prospects of normalization of relations.

Another misleading and provocative statement, which has nothing to do with reality, but deliberately calls into question the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia, was made by the Chairperson of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) of Azerbaijan, Sahiba Gafarova. In particular, according to Azerbaijani media, at the third

General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Baku, while talking about the opening of transport communications in the region, she once again referred to the so-called “Zangezur corridor”. The Armenian authorities have continuously stressed that the opening of any transport route passing through the territory of Armenia will be under the sovereign control and jurisdiction of the Republic of Armenia and will not entail any other legal or other status.

We emphasize once again that such statements made by the Azerbaijani side do not contribute to the promotion of a dialogue to resolve problems in the region.

Dear colleagues,

Armenia reiterates its readiness to start negotiations for the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan based on the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Helsinki Final Act, and conducted with the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

At the same time the comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in line with the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship, including the determination of the final status of the Nagorno-Karabakh, guarantees for the security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and respect for their rights and freedoms, as well as the remaining humanitarian issues, in particular the issue of the release of the Armenian POWs and other detainees, the protection of Armenian cultural heritage, are fundamental elements of any normalization process.

These issues are at the core of the conflict and disregarding them simply means that we are imitating a peace process which will lead us nowhere, to say the least. If we truly strive to resolve all outstanding issues these questions should be addressed and resolved. Any other approach would be a deception and another missed opportunity.

In closing, let me once again reiterate that the Government of Armenia is committed to all efforts to bring peace and prosperity to the region. Reaching lasting and durable peace in the region remains one of its top priorities.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today’s meeting.

Thank you.