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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 Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1389th meeting of the Permanent Council

15 September 2022

Mr. Chair,

The unjustified, unprovoked full-scale aggression of Azerbaijan against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia has continued through 14 September.

As of now the Armenian side sustained 105 military casualties, and several civilians were injured as a result of Azerbaijan's invasion into, and occupation of more than 50 square km of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia.

The armed forces of Azerbaijan employed artillery, mortar, and attack drones targeting Armenian military positions, towns, residential areas and critical infrastructure along the Southern and Eastern borders of the Republic of Armenia. Dozens of residential houses, civilian buildings and infrastructure as well as civilian vehicles and ambulances have been damaged as a result of targeted shelling. Furthermore, large forested areas, especially in the vicinity of the resort city of Jermuk have been deliberately set on fire */you can see some of those destructions on the screens/*.

This latest armed aggression and escalation, which signals the geographical expansion of the theater of military action, has been planned well in advance.

Even if one does not consider the consistent and systematic disinformation campaign of Azerbaijan from the beginning of September onward, the sheer intensity of shelling and bombardments, which only on the first day of attack continued unabated for more than eight hours, required for Azerbaijani forces to prepare in advance a large stock of artillery and rocket ammunition in the vicinity of the areas of planned attacks.

Considering the scale of logistical preparedness for such an operation, we can state without any doubt that this latest aggression and invasion were pre-planned and in no

way could be a response or reply to any so-called Armenian provocation, as claimed by Azerbaijan.

Yesterday, the Azerbaijani delegation distributed Note Verbales claiming that there were casualties among civilians. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that by disseminating such fabricated claims Azerbaijan tries to cover up its illegal actions against the Armenian civilians and to somehow counterbalance with a “so-called need to protect the civilians engaged in the construction works in those territories.” However, when this story-telling proved to be insufficient, Azerbaijan made another fabrication about the injured shepherd as a result of alleged shelling by the Armenian armed forces. However, delegations should be reminded that according to the Government of Azerbaijan, the access to those areas is restricted, and under such circumstances the claims about the injured shepherd sound somewhat dubious, to say the least.

Second point, as we all know, Azerbaijan is a country, where there is no free media and civil society, NGOs, which could independently confirm the claims of Azerbaijan about such casualties. Those two simple facts clearly attest to the invented nature of such information, which do not correspond to reality and should not be taken seriously.

In fact, Azerbaijan is consistently searching for new arguments to justify its aggression by making unsubstantiated claims and spreading disinformation.

For example, on landmines, Azerbaijan claims that Armenia didn't provide the maps of landmines which were planted in the beginning of 1990s during the active phase of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. The Prime Minister of Armenia and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have on numerous occasions stated that Armenia has handed over all maps of landmines to Azerbaijan without any preconditions, as a humanitarian gesture. Now Azerbaijan insists that those maps are not accurate or, which is even more ridiculous, that Armenia has somehow managed to plant new mines.

We reject all the attempts by Azerbaijan to shift the blame for its aggression on Armenia through inventing and spreading spurious, fake arguments, which in most cases border on being even ridiculous.

I want to make it absolutely clear - the cause of this latest armed attack by Azerbaijan inside the Republic of Armenia and the subsequent invasion and occupation of Armenia's territories is Azerbaijan's policy of aggression and expansionism with the ultimate goal of annexation of Armenian sovereign territories. The normalization of Azerbaijan's illegal use of force in 2020 only paved the way for further destabilization of the region by Azerbaijan. The blame for this latest act of aggression rests squarely with Azerbaijan.

The wanton brutality displayed by Azerbaijan against the densely populated settlements of Armenia during its current armed invasion, time and again proves that the real aggressor in our region, which thinks that “might is right” has been, and continues to be, Azerbaijan.

Now the world can see the true colors of Azerbaijan, which, driven by petty parochialism and aggressive nationalism as the main underpinning motives of its attitude towards Armenians for many decades and especially under the current regime, continues its policy of ethnic cleansing and aggressive expansionism against Armenia and the Armenian nation.

Mr. Chair,

This current situation brings us to square one in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The current shelling of the communities/towns and villages of the southern and eastern provinces of Syunik and Gegharkunik of Armenia might seem something new in the pattern of behavior of Azerbaijan in recent years. But in fact, this is not new for Armenia. The exact same pattern of behaviour was applied by Azerbaijan back in 1991-1992, when Baku was trying to silence the legitimate self-determination movement of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh through systematic and heavy shelling of not only Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh, but also the densely populated cities and towns of Armenia proper located in the same bordering provinces, which are being shelled today.

Many of our distinguished colleagues here might not be aware of this detail about the initial phase of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but if you ask any resident of the cities of Goris, Kapan at the age of 40 and above today, they will tell you horrible stories of brutality related to the intensive and systematic shelling and bombardment of their five cities in 1991-1992.

In those days, the aim was not only to divert the attention of Armenia to providing security to its population, while at the same time attempting to carry out ethnic cleansing of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh through such operations as the Ring, initially supported and even carried out by the Soviet Army, resulting in the ethnic cleansing of the villages and other settlements of the Shahumyan region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Another objective of Azerbaijan then was to invade and annex the southern provinces of the Republic of Armenia, which had newly regained its independence and had not formed its Armed Forces yet. Warmongering rhetoric and statements questioning the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia, the claims to our sovereign territory at the highest-

level are the bases for justifying the new aggression and expansionist policy of Azerbaijan.

Today, when the territories around Nagorno-Karabakh were returned to Azerbaijan, we have returned to square one, when the lives and security of the civilian population of the bordering provinces of Armenia have come under an existential threat again.

And not surprisingly, one of the main goals of current aggression remains unchanged, and that is to divert the attention of Armenia and the international community to the situation within Armenia proper, thus creating necessary conditions for carrying out an ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Thus, the current situation not only reveals the real aggressor in our region, but also shows the true nature and essence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which has never been a territorial issue, rather than an issue of safety and security of Armenians in Armenia proper and in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Mr. Chair,

As I have noted in my statement two days ago, Azerbaijan's reckless attack on Armenia is a deliberate escalation of the situation caused by the lack of effective deterrence, strong condemnation and appropriate actions, including targeted sanctions, by the international community, which would stop Azerbaijan's aggressive policy in the South Caucasus.

False parity and "bothsidesism" are counterproductive, whilst expressions of concern are no longer sufficient. Targeted statements, revision of all types of relations and cooperation with the aggressor state of Azerbaijan and the imposing of sanctions are necessary and urgent steps which should be undertaken, including by the OSCE participating States and the Secretariat.

We are grateful to those countries and organizations, who did not shy away from attributing the responsibility, that is from telling the truth and naming the aggressor.

Continuing to turn a blind eye to the ongoing aggression of Azerbaijan will lead to further erosion of the European security architecture and will seriously undermine the founding principles of this Organization, pushing them into oblivion.

Mr. Chair,

This latest aggression came only weeks after another meeting of the respective leaders in Brussels, even though there were concrete agreements reached regarding further steps within the framework of the Brussels process.

However, the maximalist and ultimatum-like stance of Azerbaijani President in respect of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its comprehensive settlement, as well as in respect of the work of the trilateral commission on unblocking of regional infrastructures and transport communication, is indicative of the true intentions of Azerbaijan.

The current approach of Azerbaijan to try to make maximum gains from the position of power and by reverting to the use of force or threat of force as an instrument of coercive bargaining is absolutely unacceptable.

The absence of any political will on the part of its leadership to work towards building sustainable peace, security and stability in the whole region is evident. Even more, the latest developments clearly suggest that Azerbaijani President does not even want peace. Maintaining the image of Armenians as enemies, continuing anti-Armenian hatred and propaganda became a convenient tool to fan the nationalistic sentiments and thus consolidate the society with the ultimate purpose of ensuring the continuity of the current autocratic regime.

In fact, exactly the lack of political will and true commitment of Azerbaijan have been the real impediments for achieving any tangible result in the framework of the peace process under the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. We believe, and have stated on numerous occasions, that we should strive to revitalize this negotiation format, while being fully cognizant of the extremely challenging and extraordinary current geopolitical situation.

This latest escalation makes the resumption of the Minsk Process a matter of urgent necessity and we appeal to the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group to make efforts to that end, in accordance with their international mandate.

Mr. Chair,

Azerbaijan must immediately, completely and unconditionally stop its aggression against Armenia, withdraw all its troops from the Armenian territory, which it has occupied since May 2021. We also demand to immediately and unconditionally release all Armenian Prisoners of War. In this context, we expect a reaction from the international community, which is important in terms of preventing torture, violence, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of Armenian prisoners of war as was the case during the 44-day war.

The Republic of Armenia has been a staunch supporter and promoter of the international law and taking this opportunity we once again reiterate our commitment to norms and principles of international law as enshrined in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final act and

all OSCE decisions and documents, which form the backbone of this organization, primarily the principle of non-use of force or threat of force in settlement of disputes.

Unfortunately, the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, the 44-days war of 2020 and the current unjustified and unprovoked aggression of Azerbaijan against the sovereign territory of Armenia clearly show that the fundamental principle of non-use of force has never been an impediment for Azerbaijan.

Further use or threat of force will undermine the ongoing processes in the region aimed at establishing peace and security in the South Caucasus and the settlement of all issues related to and resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Mr. Chair,

In the end I would like to recall our request to the Secretariat to make the full use of the OSCE conflict cycle related toolkit and to inform the Permanent Council thereof.

Areas in Armenia reported as targeted by Azerbaijan from 13 September 2022









