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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement
in response to Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov,
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1343rd meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

04 November 2021

Madame Chairperson,

At the outset, let me warmly welcome High Commissioner Kairat Abdrakhmanov back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his detailed report.

Protection and promotion of national minorities is one of the priorities of the Armenian Government. The rights of the four national minority groups in Armenia, namely Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians and Kurds are protected by the Constitution and the respective law on national minorities.

The largest minority group in Armenia are the Yezidis, which constitutes only about 5 percent of the total number of Yezidis scattered around the world. There are 11 villages in Armenia with a compact Yezidi population. At the same time, the largest Yezidi temple in the world was built in Armenia recently. Along with the Russian, Assyrian and Kurdish minorities, Yezidis are represented in the Parliament of Armenia, which is provided for by the Constitution, regardless of the election results. National minorities are also represented in local governance - heads of local authorities in a number of communities are representatives of minorities. Particular attention is paid to opportunities of primary education in the native languages of minorities.

Dear High Commissioner,

The situation of national minorities and the challenges they face differ from country to country. Unfortunately, history knows a number of cases when the once indigenous peoples were gradually reduced to a minority group in their own homeland with the subsequent complete extermination and disappearance. Our own history is reminiscent of this.

We note the importance of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations, which provide a useful framework for ensuring equal rights and fundamental freedoms of national minorities. At the same time, we

emphasize that international norms and principles should not serve as justification or pretext for suppressing the rights and fundamental freedoms of national minorities. That being said, we believe that these recommendations should be further developed with a view to taking more robust action against the backdrop of continuous unlawful suppression and violation of the rights of national or ethnic minorities by some governments.

On a more positive note, we commend your active co-operation with other international partners, including the Council of Europe and the United Nations. We also call for increased co-operation with all 57 OSCE participating States with a view to addressing the needs of all national minorities in the OSCE area.

Dear High Commissioner,

We continue to closely monitor the situation with the protection and promotion of the rights of Armenian minorities in the OSCE participating States. In this regard, we attach particular importance to your mandate on early warning and early action to prevent ethnic tensions from escalating into conflict.

We also emphasize the need to pay particular attention to the extreme manifestations of state-induced hate propaganda based on ethnic or national origin, especially when such hatred is promoted by the leader of an OSCE participating State.

In closing, Ambassador Abdrakhmanov, we wish you every success in your endeavours and assure you of Armenia's continued support in fulfilling your mandate.

Thank you.