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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 781st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

12 November 2009

In response to the statements by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference

The European Union (EU) welcomes the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group, and especially Ambassador Bradtke for his first appearance before the Permanent Council, and the Permanent Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, and thanks them for their detailed reports.

The European Union welcomes the dynamic pace of the negotiations on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that the regular meetings between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan have particularly illustrated over the course of the past year. We note with satisfaction that five meetings of this kind have already been organized in 2009 and that a sixth meeting should take place before the end of November. The EU notes that these meetings have all confirmed the constructive nature of the relationship established between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan and their willingness to reach a mutual understanding of the basic principles that were submitted to them during the Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid in November 2007. That document today constitutes the only just and balanced proposition paving the way towards a lasting settlement of the conflict. The European Union hopes that further progress towards a peaceful solution, on a basis that combines three of the ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely, refraining from the use of force, the territorial integrity of States and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples, may be achieved in practice in the next few months.

The European Union is in full agreement with the declaration made by the presidents of France, the United States of America and the Russian Federation on 10 July 2009 on the margins of the G8 Summit in L'Aquila. The European Union encourages the parties, as the Heads of State of the three co-mediating countries did in earnest on that occasion, to quickly finalize the Madrid document. As it has underscored on many occasions, the European Union recalls that the efforts by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group will only be successful if the parties take responsibility and have the courage to agree to the necessary compromises. It therefore urges them once more to demonstrate the realism and political will needed to achieve a mutually acceptable settlement. The European Union calls on the parties to redouble their efforts in order to actively prepare the public in their countries for the prospect of such an accord being concluded.

Madam Chairperson,

The European Union is aware that another historic process is also under way in the region and that it will also contribute to security, stability and co-operation throughout the South Caucasus. The European Union would, however, like to mention that this process and the negotiations on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are separate. In this regard, the European Union would like to recall the statement by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group of 1 October 2009, according to which:

“The Minsk Group negotiations are a separate process that should move forward along its own rationale, without preconditions, without any linkages, within a reasonable time-frame, and without imposed acceleration or delay.”

Madam Chairperson,

We should like to make known our positive views on the work undertaken, sometimes under difficult security conditions, as demonstrated by the exchanges of fire on 26 February 2009 that resulted in the cancellation of the inspection mission by the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, Ambassador Kasprzyk, and his team. The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the continuation without hindrance of their ceasefire monitoring activities on the line of contact and along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. These activities unquestionably contribute towards reducing tension in the region and constitute a valuable instrument for implementing confidence-building measures in the field.

In this context, the European Union is encouraged by the assessment made by Ambassador Kasprzyk of an overall reduction in the number of violations of the ceasefire since March 2009, which coincides with an intensification of the efforts by the co-mediators. In renewing our call for strict respect for the ceasefire, we urge the parties to respect in good faith their commitments not to resort to violence. Since Ambassador Kasprzyk has attributed most of the military and civilian victims this year to snipers and we deplore these losses, we are once again disappointed that the recommendations made at the Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki by the Ministers of the countries co-chairing the Minsk Group concerning the withdrawal from the line of contact of long-range precision weapons have not been put into effect on the ground.

In conclusion, the European Union renews its full support for the mediation provided by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group and for the activities of Ambassador Kasprzyk. The European Union also reiterates its determination to work closely with the parties to promote stability and prosperity and consolidate democracy and the rule of law in the region, and its intention to strengthen its co-operative relations with them, notably within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Stabilisation and Association Process countries and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway align themselves with this statement.