



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, H.E. Edward Nalbandian**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 11, 2015

I would like to warmly welcome Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian to the Permanent Council.

Mr. Minister, since your last appearance at the Permanent Council in June 2013, the United States and Armenia have continued to pursue a strong relationship spanning a broad range of shared interests, including preserving peace and regional security, promoting trade and investment, and advancing democratization and the rule of law. Assistant Secretary of State Nuland's visit to Yerevan on February 18 demonstrates our strong commitment to this relationship.

We remain deeply concerned about the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, particularly the escalating violence and loss of life along the line of contact and state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As a co-chair of the Minsk Group, the United States remains committed to working with the sides to find a lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We strongly believe that a settlement would transform the South Caucasus and enable the people of the region to live together in peace and dignity. We welcomed the three presidential meetings that took place last year, which included a public commitment by the presidents to resolve the conflict peacefully. We encourage the sides to build on this momentum and continue the presidential summits this year, while turning these commitments into concrete measures on the ground through more people-to-people contacts and confidence-building measures. The status quo, with its closed borders, reduced economic activity, and ongoing violence, is not sustainable.

A negotiated settlement is the foundation for peace. But preserving that peace will require a strong democracy and a robust economy. Armenia has achieved progress in these areas, and we encourage you to continue to cooperate closely with the OSCE Office in Yerevan as you strive toward further progress. The strong mandate of the Office allows it to work across all three OSCE dimensions to support Armenia in implementing its OSCE commitments. The Office's support for community policing, regulatory reform, and the new human rights action plan are evidence of the valuable cross-dimensional support the OSCE provides. We appreciate Armenia's positive and thoughtful approach to its field mission—viewing it as a tool to help advance reforms that Armenians want for their country. As Armenia strives for a more participatory, decentralized, and accountable system of governance, the OSCE Office in Yerevan pays dividends for all Armenians.

Armenia has an active civil society with a vibrant dialogue between the government and the people. With that in mind, we urge Armenia to embrace the Office in Yerevan's work to further promote dialogue between the Government and civil society, and to conduct fair investigations into attacks on civil society. We are concerned by recent events in which it appeared the government selectively applied the law and used state resources against the opposition to achieve a political goal. Armenia must continue to safeguard an open space for civil society and ensure that actions of the authorities do not erode the public trust.

Mr. Minister, last week 48 of the participating States around this table joined in a statement to mark Zero Discrimination Day. In this statement we reaffirmed that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and recommitted ourselves to combatting all forms of discrimination. Sadly, Armenia was not one of the states that joined this statement. We hope that, in the future, Armenia will join us in reaffirming these fundamental principles of human rights.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.