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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Promoting comprehensive security, stability and sustainable development in the OSCE area through women’s economic empowerment”

Opening statement by the Delegation of Armenia

Prague, 9-10 September 2021

Madame Moderator,

At the outset, let me express our appreciation to the Swedish Chairpersonship, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the Czech authorities for the smooth organization of this Concluding Meeting and the traditional hospitality amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We also thank our distinguished speakers, Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Ann Linde, H.E. Jakub Kulháněk, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, as well as Secretary General Helga Schmid for their opening remarks.

There is no doubt that women are equal partners in political, social and economic life, and it is the responsibility of the participating States to put in place such safeguards that will ensure the equal and active participation of women in all these areas of life. Although one can argue on the order of causation between the economic empowerment and the active political participation of women, one thing is clear - they are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the Swedish Chairpersonship in promoting women’s rights, including the economic empowerment and further expanding their engagement in the political, social and economic life of our societies. The discussions we had at the Preparatory Meetings helped to highlight best practices, as well as shortcomings of participating States in this regard.

Dear colleagues,

In Armenia, over the years, we have been constantly increasing the role and engagement of women in almost all areas of daily life. Along with many achievements, most notably the active participation of women in politics, we continue to discover the benefits of women's participation in various aspects of our life. We believe that increasing the mandatory threshold of women's representation in the Parliament will further reinforce this important trend. The number of women in senior positions in public administration is also on the rise. The implementation in Armenia of the Gender Policy Strategy for 2019-2023 and the Action Plan are aimed at bridging the gap and reducing social and economic inequality between women and men, increasing the competitiveness of women in the labour market, expanding economic opportunities and much more. Armenia has also promoted women's rights in its capacity as Chair of the UN Commission on the Status of Women for the period 2020-2021. As we note the many accomplishments, we are also aware of the important work ahead.

It should also be noted that Armenia has a good track record of effective co-operation with the OSCE in the area of women's economic empowerment. The Network of Women's Resource Centers, as well as the ongoing project on the *Economic Empowerment of Women in Syunik Region and Other Regions of Armenia* are important instruments to this end.

Madame Moderator,

Women are often the first to face the blows and hardships of wars and various crises. This was the case also during the COVID-19 pandemic. In our region, many women were exposed to multiple hardships, trapped between the pandemic and the war of aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh almost a year ago.

That being said, we are well aware of the important role of women when it comes to promoting peace and security, also bearing in mind the crucial role of women as educators who bear a huge responsibility to instill the values of peace and humanity in their children.

In closing, let me stress that the delegation of Armenia looks forward to fruitful and result-oriented discussions, and is ready to contribute constructively to them.

Thank you.