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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

**Statement  
in response to the statement  
by France on behalf of the European Union  
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan  
at the 1375<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

*26 May 2022*

The Delegation of Armenia takes note of the statement just delivered by the delegation of France on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following comments.

We would like to thank the President of the European Council Charles Michel for hosting the high level meeting in Brussels and for his continued efforts in facilitating contacts between Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and President of Azerbaijan Ilkham Aliyev.

As a result of the meeting, which took place on 22 May in Brussels, further understanding was reached on the launch of the work of the Commissions on Border Demarcation and Security and the further course of work on the opening of regional communications. Likewise, issues related to the preparations for the negotiation process on normalization were also discussed. An agreement was reached to continue the trilateral meetings, scheduling another meeting for July or August.

While generally positively assessing the meeting, we would have liked to see a clear reference to the core issues of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, comprehensive resolution of which are key prerequisites for sustainable peace in the region.

We also note with regret that comments unrelated to the content of the discussions were voiced after the meeting. We would like to emphasize that such a practice is highly counterproductive and can potentially derail the fragile process.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to also inform the delegations that on May 24, 2022, within the framework of the implementation of the agreements reached between the two countries the first meeting between the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Mher Grigoryan and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Shahin Mustafayev was held on the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, within the format of the joint work of the commissions on delimitation and border security between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The sides reiterated their readiness to work on delimitation and other relevant issues, including border security issues within the commissions. During the meeting a number of organizational and procedural issues of the commission's joint activities were also discussed.

Along with the meetings at the interstate border, the sides agreed on the expediency of different platforms for further meetings of the commissions. In particular, an agreement was reached to hold the second meeting in Moscow and the third one in Brussels.

Dear colleagues,

If Azerbaijan is sincerely aiming for peace, then, primarily, it should reject and denounce the use of force as a means for the settlement of disputes, as it is required by international law. Another necessary condition is that Azerbaijan denounces its territorial claims for the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia.

As a matter of priority, Azerbaijan should also fully comply with its commitments under the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 and international humanitarian law, namely, to immediately and unconditionally release all Armenian prisoners of war and civilians still held captive in Azerbaijan, in clear violation of the said commitments. It is highly deplorable and discouraging that 18 months after the signing of the trilateral ceasefire statement, at least 39 Armenian prisoners of war and civilians are still held captive in Azerbaijan. This is the confirmed number of Armenian POWs by Azerbaijan. In addition, the fact that Azerbaijan continues to hide the real number of Armenian captives and refuses to provide any information, even in relation to those cases that have been confirmed by video, photo or other evidence, clearly indicates Azerbaijan's ongoing violation of IHL, and the continuation of its hostile policies.

Azerbaijan also continues its belligerent and anti-Armenian actions along the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh. Thus, just a day prior to the meeting in Brussels, on 21 May 2022 the armed forces of Azerbaijan fired at the positions of the Armed forces of Armenia in the eastern part of the border with Armenia wounding private Gor Gyulsaryan. It is noteworthy that most of the recent attacks

conducted by the armed forces of Azerbaijan were coming from the strongholds entrenched on the sovereign territory of Armenia in continuation of the illegal presence of Azerbaijan since 12 May 2021. It is high time for Azerbaijan to demonstrate its adherence to the peace agenda and withdraw its armed forces from the sovereign territory of Armenia.

Azerbaijan should also rectify the results of its aggression and violation of its commitment under the first paragraph of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020, which states that, “... **the Parties shall remain at their current positions**”, and should withdraw its forces from the village of Parukh and adjacent territories, including part of the strategic height of Karaglukh in Artsakh and return to the positions prior to 24th March.

Mr Chairman,

The comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in line with the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship, including the determination of the final status of the Nagorno-Karabakh through recognition of the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination, guarantees for the security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and respect for their rights and freedoms, as well as the remaining humanitarian issues, in particular the issue of the release of the Armenian POWs and other detainees, the protection of Armenian cultural heritage, is a fundamental element of any normalization process aimed at establishing stability and peace in the region.

The shortest path to building confidence and creating an environment conducive to peace is the full and unconditional implementation by Azerbaijan of its international obligations and other commitments, denouncement of the use or threat of force as the means of conflict resolution, as well as genuine engagement in negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Thank you.