

**Statement by Ambassador Buluç, Turkish Permanent Representative  
In Response to Mr. Vartan Oskanyan, Armenian Foreign Minister  
Permanent Council, 17 April 2007**

Mr. Chairman,

The presence of Foreign Minister Oskanyan at the Permanent Council for the second time in the space of a year attests to the interest and importance his government places on the OSCE. In turn, commensurate with the interest and great importance my country attaches to the well being and peaceful, prosperous future of our common geography, we would like to take this opportunity to respond to the Minister through a national statement. That is not to say that the joint EU statement which was just read does not cover in its broad scope what we wish to say.

We likewise welcome Minister Oskanyan today to the Permanent Council, at an important juncture in the political history of Armenia, on the eve of elections. We trust that these elections will constitute a further step in consolidating Armenia's democratic credentials and respond to its peoples aspirations for peace, stability and prosperity which can only be attained through good neighborly relations as our indispensable premise for regional collaboration and eventual integration.

Minister Oskanyan in sharing his views on Armenia's future perspectives in a number of previous occasions coined "a difficult place" as a jargon to characterize his perception of the political setting he sees as surrounding his country. Difficulties are not endemic to any particular geography. In the southern Caucasus they are the result of disregard by Armenia for the basic tenets of international norms and principles, as well as relevant UNSC resolutions, as manifest today by two decades of continuing occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan. My authorities consider the Nagorno Karabagh conflict as the primary source of instability in the region and a critical obstacle to peace and regional co-operation.

The Minsk Process constitutes the essential tool to resolve this conflict and consign it to history. Much progress has already been achieved over the course of the last year as we have recently been appraised by the Co-Chairman of the Minsk Group. We expect the two sides to further build on these achievements and to refrain from going back on already agreed principles. Neither efforts to enlarge the negotiating format, nor imposing conditions for a full withdrawal of foreign forces from the territory of Azerbaijan can be conducive to the process. There is a whole host of UN Security Council Resolutions which as a common instruction and in no equivocal terms requires Armenia to end the military occupation and vacate the Azeri territories. To name a few by their number let me refer you to Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884. It is our strong hope and expectation that the Minsk process will bear results and do so soon, thereby opening up a prospect which would stimulate steps towards a normalization of our bilateral relations with Armenia.

We must all register with satisfaction the portrayal by the Minister that Armenian economy is on the rise. I would be happier if Minister Oskanyan were to have acknowledged that Turkish goods are abundantly available in Armenia, and likewise Armenian guest workers in Turkey in their thousands, to be precise 70 thousand, who make a significant contribution to a prospering Armenian economy. This, Mr. Minister, does not confirm the picture that you sought to illustrate by what you termed as isolation, blockade and alienation. Such misrepresentation does not augur well for the future and could possibly result in progressively deeper self isolation of Armenia.

Regional stability and co-operation, much sought by Armenia, equally requires her to exercise a strong political will to relieve itself from what the leader of the opposition Rule of Law Party in Armenia, Mr. Baghdasaryan, recently in an article for the Wall Street Journal termed “remaining trapped in the past”. Armenia, while ignoring Turkey’s good will and gestures towards her by refusing to engage in a dialogue which would examine all aspects of our common history and while pursuing an aggressive international anti-Turkish agenda, should not expect to be rewarded.

We wish Ministers Oskanyan and Memmedyarov success in Belgrade.

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-My diplomatic training disallows that I should utter the last word in an interlocution with a minister. Suffice it to say that despite my gentle remainder, Minister Oskanyan did not grant the audience the reality of the significant share that Turkey has in the economic development of Armenia. What he stated illustrates a situation where steps taken by my country are not understood and interpreted as measures of encouragement towards embracing a better common future but as acts that seek to disturb, even undermine Armenia’s game plan. These two factors make the situation even sadder.