

Chairmanship: Poland

1354th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1. Date: Thursday, 10 February 2022 (in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.
Suspended: 1 p.m.
Resumed: 3 p.m.
Closed: 4.45 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador A. Hałaciński

Prior to taking up the agenda, the Chairperson and the Secretary General welcomed the new Permanent Representative of Romania to the OSCE, Ambassador Stelian Stoian.

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: PRESENTATION BY THE CHAIRS OF THE THREE COMMITTEES: THE SECURITY COMMITTEE, THE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE AND THE HUMAN DIMENSION COMMITTEE

Chairperson, Chairperson of the Security Committee (PC.DEL/187/22 OSCE+), Chairperson of the Economic and Environmental Committee, Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee (PC.DEL/164/22), Secretary General, France-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/179/22), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/161/22 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/159/22), Turkey (PC.DEL/180/21 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/186/22 OSCE+), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/194/22 OSCE+), Georgia (PC.DEL/185/22 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Ukraine (PC.DEL/192/22), Holy

See (PC.DEL/162/22 Restr.), Armenia (PC.DEL/193/22), Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/188/22 OSCE+)

Agenda item 2: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson

- (a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea*: Ukraine (PC.DEL/171/22), France-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/177/22), Canada, United Kingdom, United States of America (PC.DEL/163/22), Turkey (PC.DEL/182/21 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/189/22 OSCE+)
- (b) *Deteriorating situation in Ukraine and continued non-implementation by the Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/172/22)
- (c) *Aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and Armenia with the direct involvement of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters*: Armenia (Annex 1)
- (d) *Deteriorating human rights situation in the Russian Federation*: France-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/178/22), United States of America (PC.DEL/167/22), Switzerland (PC.DEL/190/22 OSCE+), United Kingdom (also on behalf of Canada), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/175/22 OSCE+), Germany (Annex 2), Canada
- (e) *High-level meeting held via video teleconference on 4 February and the release of eight Armenian prisoners of war on 7 February 2022*: France-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra and Ukraine, in alignment), United States of America (PC.DEL/168/22), Canada, United Kingdom, Turkey (PC.DEL/181/21 OSCE+), Armenia, Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/195/22 OSCE+)

Agenda item 3: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE

- (a) *High-level inauguration meeting of the Renewed OSCE European Security Dialogue, held on 8 February 2022*: Chairperson

- (b) *Visit of the Chairman-in-Office to Ukraine taking place on 10 and 11 February 2022: Chairperson*
- (c) *First preparatory meeting for the 30th Economic and Environmental Forum on “Promoting security and stability in the OSCE area through sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”, to be held in Vienna and via video teleconference on 14 and 15 February 2022: Chairperson*
- (d) *Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region, held in Warsaw and via video teleconference on 7 and 8 February 2022: Chairperson*
- (e) *First Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of 2022, on “International co-operation in the service of human rights”, to be held in Vienna and via video teleconference on 14 and 15 March 2022 (CIO/GAL/12/22 OSCE+): Chairperson*

Agenda item 4: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Announcement of the distribution of the Secretary General’s weekly report (SEC.GAL/21/22 OSCE+): Secretary General*
- (b) *Thematic report by the Secretary General on climate change and security to be discussed at the Permanent Council meeting on 17 February 2022: Secretary General*
- (c) *Call for nominations for the seconded positions of Criminal Justice Adviser, Transnational Threats Department, OSCE Secretariat; Deputy Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan; and Deputy Co-ordinator, Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings: Secretary General, Norway*
- (d) *Meeting between the Secretary General and H.E. Mr. B. Della Vedova, Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, on 3 February 2022: Secretary General*
- (e) *Participation of the Secretary General in the Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region, held in Warsaw and via video teleconference on 7 and 8 February 2022: Secretary General*
- (f) *Participation of the Secretary General in the 1000th plenary meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation, held on 9 February 2022: Secretary General*

Agenda item 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Sami People’s Day, celebrated on 6 February 2022: Norway (PC.DEL/174/22), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/173/22 OSCE+)*
- (b) *High-level international conference on regional co-operation among Central Asian States within the framework of the Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in*

*Central Asia, to be held in Tashkent on 3 and 4 March 2022: Uzbekistan
(PC.DEL/170/22 OSCE+)*

(c) *Parliamentary elections in Slovenia, to be held on 24 April 2022: Slovenia*

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 17 February 2022, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal and via video
teleconference



1354th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1354, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

Mr. Chairperson,

For more than a year now, the Armenian delegation has been regularly bringing to the Permanent Council's attention, and updating the participating States on, developments on the ground following the 44-day war of aggression against Artsakh and its people launched by Azerbaijan on 27 September 2020 with the direct involvement of foreign terrorist fighters and Turkey, which has had devastating consequences not only for the people of Artsakh, but also for the region as a whole and beyond.

Today, I wish to focus on the situation as regards the Armenian cultural heritage remaining in the occupied territories of Artsakh, which are now under the military control of Azerbaijan. This is not the first time that we bring up the fate of these Armenian cultural and religious sites and monuments, but in view of certain developments, we consider it extremely urgent to once again raise our concerns in this regard.

Mr. Chairperson,
Dear colleagues,

Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) has a rich and complex cultural history. It is home to around 4,000 Armenian cultural sites, including 370 churches, 119 fortresses, and other historical and cultural monuments and antiquities that are several centuries old.

Following the 44-day war of aggression, up to 2,000 Armenian historical and cultural assets came under the control of Azerbaijan. They included 161 Armenian churches, more than ten chapels, 52 castles and fortresses, 591 *khachkars* (unique carved cross-stones), the archaeological site of Tigranakert, the Azokh Cave complex from the Palaeolithic period, the Nor Karmiravan tombs, and other historical monuments such as palaces, bridges and ancient residential quarters.

Armenia has continuously expressed its concern over the fate of these monuments and sites and called for the protection of their identity and architectural integrity. These concerns were recently aggravated by an announcement, made on 3 February by the Minister of Culture of Azerbaijan, Anar Karimov, who said that "a working group of specialists in

Albanian history and architecture has been set up to remove the fictitious traces written by Armenians on Albanian religious temples.”

This announcement once again confirmed the validity of our widely expressed concerns about the fate of thousands of Armenian cultural and religious heritage sites remaining in the occupied territories of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) that fell under Azerbaijan’s control as a result of the 2020 war.

The announcement was clearly a follow-up to the instructions given by the President of Azerbaijan to Azerbaijani officials back on 18 March 2021 to remove medieval Armenian inscriptions from the walls of all churches and monuments in the territories of Artsakh captured by the Azerbaijani armed forces, thereby signalling the continuation of Azerbaijan’s long-standing State-sponsored policy of destroying and desecrating the Armenian cultural and religious heritage.

The creation of a public body tasked with removing all the original Armenian inscriptions and other signs of origin from cultural and religious sites – consequently resulting in the misappropriation, vandalizing and desecration of the Armenian cultural heritage, including churches, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artefacts – is yet another step aimed at destruction or appropriation of the indigenous Armenian cultural heritage as supposedly originating from an entity, “Caucasian Albania”, that had become extinct by the mid-ninth century – a theory promoted by Azerbaijan but dismissed by mainstream historians and scholars.

The Azerbaijani authorities are creating pretexts for perpetrating massive crimes against the region’s Armenian cultural heritage sites and objects by removing their original Armenian inscriptions and other signs of their cultural, religious and ethnic origin. This is a deliberate act of cultural misappropriation committed in blatant disregard for international law and in violation of the rights of Armenians to enjoy their cultural identity and heritage as created and preserved by generations of their ancestors over many centuries.

The recent statement by the Minister of Culture of Azerbaijan follows the already tried-and-tested policy pattern of the Azerbaijani authorities seeking to erase every trace of Armenian existence in the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhijevan. This policy culminated in the complete eradication of the medieval necropolis of Djulfa, the largest Armenian cemetery in the world, and its thousands of *khachkars* (distinctive Armenian cross-stones) during 1997–2005. Interestingly, before the final act of annihilation, Azerbaijan at the time also first rebranded the sacred Armenian site as “Caucasian Albanian” and then created a State body tasked with drawing up an inventory of the exclave’s monuments. In the end, all traces of Armenian cultural heritage were removed from the exclave.

In this regard, I should like to quote a recent report by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), where it is stressed that “there are real fears that Armenian cultural heritage will bear the brunt of a war on memory designed to rewrite history.” The PACE report also points out that the precedent set in the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhijevan, where, according to credible sources, Armenian cultural heritage was destroyed, raises legitimate fears of this happening again.

Another very striking example of the desecration and misappropriation of Armenian religious heritage is the case of the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral (Cathedral of Holy Saviour) in Shushi. On 8 October 2020, the cathedral, which is a historical and religious symbol of Artsakh and Shushi, was bombed twice within a space of few hours, resulting in the partial destruction of its two domes. The attacks were carried out with precision weapons, which proves their deliberate nature, and are a blatant violation of the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Article 7 of the Protocol stipulates that parties to a conflict shall, *inter alia*, “do everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are not cultural property”.

The Ghazanchetsots Cathedral was also vandalized just a few days after the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of a ceasefire. Moreover, under the guise of “reconstruction works”, Azerbaijan is attempting to completely alter the architectural integrity of the cathedral and thereby to distort the Armenian historical and cultural appearance of the city of Shushi.

The starting point of these attempts was the dismantling of the conical metallic dome of the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in May 2021 to tamper with the architectural integrity of the monument before any international experts’ assessment mission could be deployed. In a communication of 2 February 2021, United Nations special-procedures mandate holders called for the full involvement of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the reconstruction works and inquired about the condition of artworks, furnishings, books, manuscripts and relics in the cathedral. Azerbaijan has not responded to this communication.

It is important to note that this is not the first time that Shushi and its symbolic cathedral have been the targets of deliberate attacks by Azerbaijan. Indeed, during the conflict of 1988–1994, after the deportation of the local Armenian community in 1988, the Azerbaijani authorities destroyed the bas-reliefs of the cathedral and turned it into an arsenal. Throughout the Nagorno-Karabakh war of the 1990s they stored Grad multiple-launch rocket systems inside the cathedral, thereby converting one of the Armenian people’s most sacred sites into a source of death and destruction.

The cultural and religious monuments of Artsakh are material evidence of the undeniable Armenian presence in the region going back several millennia. For instance, the partially excavated archaeological site of Tigranakert, which is currently under the control of Azerbaijan, has been described as the “best-preserved city of the Hellenistic and Armenian civilizations” of the Caucasus. It was founded at the turn of the second and first centuries BC and later became an important centre of early Christianity. Over ten inscriptions in the Armenian and Greek languages dating back to the fifth and seventh centuries AD have been discovered there so far.

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, more than a year after the cessation of hostilities, the fate of the monuments, religious sites and museum exhibits under the military control of Azerbaijan remains unclear. The assurances given by the President of Azerbaijan in the aftermath of the war of aggression regarding the preservation of the Armenian cultural heritage have turned out to be hollow.

The new “working group” established by Azerbaijan is a deliberate violation of the interim decision of the International Court of Justice of 7 December 2021, which in the *Armenia v. Azerbaijan* case ruled that Azerbaijan must “take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artefacts”. Instead of abiding by the Court’s ruling, Azerbaijan is creating a State body to institutionalize its vandalism against, and desecration of, the Armenian cultural heritage.

Azerbaijan’s actions and declared intentions are also in gross violation not only of the 1954 Hague Convention, but also of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Human Rights Council resolution of 30 September 2016 on cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage (A/HRC/RES/33/20), United Nations Security Council resolution 2347 (2017) and other key international legally binding instruments, which prohibit and condemn the destruction of cultural property during armed conflict.

Although there has been some condemnation of the malevolent intentions of Azerbaijan – in particular, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom expressed its deep concern over “Azerbaijan’s plans to remove Armenian Apostolic inscriptions from churches” and urged the Government of Azerbaijan “to preserve and protect places of worship and other religious and cultural sites” – we expect more vigorous and outspoken statements from the international community.

Mr. Chairperson,

For more than a year, Armenia has been undertaking every possible effort to protect and preserve these cultural and religious sites and monuments, including various efforts at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

In view of the current situation, immediate intervention and unimpeded access to the region by the international community, in particular UNESCO, are required to prevent further acts of destruction and vandalism against the Armenian monuments of Artsakh, which are part of the world’s cultural heritage.

We welcome the intention of UNESCO to conduct a technical visit to Armenia and Azerbaijan aimed at paving the way for an impartial fully fledged mission to Nagorno-Karabakh, including the territories that fell under the military control of Azerbaijan, to take place as soon as possible. We hope that such a fully fledged mission by UNESCO to Nagorno-Karabakh can be conducted at the earliest opportunity, and that the mission team will be granted full and unhindered access to all cultural and religious sites.

Mr Chairperson,

The current situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is the result of Azerbaijan’s flagrant violation of several core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely, refraining from the threat or use of force; the peaceful settlement of disputes; equal rights and self-determination of peoples; and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. No one should be under any illusion that the results of the use of force, accompanied by war crimes and violations of

international humanitarian law, can ever become the basis for a lasting and sustainable peace. Such a peace can be achieved in the region only through a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which must include determining the status of Artsakh on the basis of the realization by the people of Artsakh of their inalienable right to self-determination; ensuring the safe and dignified return of displaced to their homes; and preserving the region's historical and religious heritage.

I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1354
10 February 2022
Annex 2

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

1354th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1354, Agenda item 2(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF GERMANY**

Mr. Chairperson,

Since my Russian colleague mentioned Germany, I should like to exercise my right of reply.

We firmly reject the comparison between Deutsche Welle and the broadcaster RT DE. Deutsche Welle works as an independent broadcaster on the basis of the applicable legislation and with the relevant licence.

RT DE is currently broadcasting without a licence, and has not applied for one, although this is a prerequisite for broadcasting. Responsibility for reviewing such matters lies with the competent independent state media authorities. The same rules apply to RT DE as to all other broadcasters, including the aspect of separation between broadcast media and the State required for the granting of licences. The Federal Government has no influence on this procedure or on the decision taken by the state media authorities' Commission on Licensing and Supervision. Under German law, RT DE has the option of taking legal action against the decision by the state media authority.

German media law imposes legal requirements on the work of German television stations in particular. RT DE's new television channel must also meet these requirements. This is exactly what the Foreign Minister explained in Moscow on 18 January.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of the day.