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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

ENGLISH only



Statement

**in response to the Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office
Ambassador Tetiana Izhevskaya, Rabby Andrew Baker and Ambassador Adil Akhmetov
delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 970th Meeting of the OSCE
Permanent Council**

November 7, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

We also join the other delegations in warmly welcoming the Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Tetiana Izhevskaya, Rabby Andrew Baker and Ambassador Adil Akhmetov to the Permanent Council and thank them for informative reports.

We appreciate activities of this mandate as we believe it brings an added value to the work of the OSCE in addressing issues of intolerance and discrimination from the particular perspective of the protection of religious minorities, their political, social and cultural rights including preservation of their cultural heritage. The issues of restitution and reparation to the religious communities who had been subject of past persecutions could be further elaborated here.

In our view, success of this mandate will be further determined by its ability to clearly delineate the scope of its activities which is in our understanding is protection and promotion of the religious minorities. The very fact of the existence of three mandates indicates that it could not be hierarchy between protection of religious groups based on their faith and belief.

The instances of discrimination and violence targeting religious minorities have a tendency to grow in the OSCE neighborhood and this has security implications in the OSCE area as well.

It should be acknowledged that religious extremism gravely affects the right of individuals and religious communities to practice their faith without pressure in a free and equal manner.

We hope that we will be able to strengthen our commitments on the freedom of religion in the Kiev Ministerial Council which will be reflective of the current challenges and our determination to address them.

We look forward to see more visits of the three representatives particularly to those participating states where minorities are registered as religious groups.

Lastly, I would like to wish the Personal Representatives all success in their important mission to promote religious tolerance.

Thank you