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

Statement
in response to the Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan
delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1089th Meeting of the OSCE
Permanent Council
February 11, 2016

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE provides a platform for equal dialogue among all participating states regardless of their relations and diverging opinions and in this vein we would like to engage in discussions with Deputy Minister Azimov.

We took note of the points made by Mr. Azimov and we would like to elaborate on some of them. But first let me stress that protracted conflict cannot be resolved by protracted accusations. At the same time, it should be remembered that referring to some negotiating details of the agreed format at the Permanent Council particularly to those which have never happened is not very conducive for frank and goal oriented dialogue.

Mr. Azimov made a point on principles of international law regarding conflict settlement. All Helsinki principles are of primary significance. When it comes to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict all OSCE participating states, including Armenia and Azerbaijan, agreed that non use of force, territorial integrity, equal rights and self-determination of peoples are principles upon which the conflict resolution should be based. The attempt to revisit our OSCE commitments, including the Athens Ministerial Statement, simply because other principles are frequently referred in other conflict situations, is not helpful at all and can further protract settlement of already protracted conflict.

Here I would like to remind the distinguished Deputy Minister that the conflict is not about territories, it is about the rights of the indigenous people. We regret to note that the anti-Armenian policy of Azerbaijan has remained unchanged more than 25 years. Azerbaijan rejects to recognize the right of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to self-determination. We would like to recall that this very right is proclaimed by the presidents of the Co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group as one of the basic principles of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution and endorsed by the OSCE Athens Ministerial Statement. Determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will stands at the core of the settlement.

The people of Nagorno-Karabakh is de-facto independent since dissolution of the Soviet Union, when it exercised its right for self-determination according to the state legislation and international law. Therefore claims of Azerbaijan to exercise its sovereignty over the people of Nagorno-Karabakh are baseless. Should the human rights of people of Nagorno-Karabakh including right to freedom of movement, right to vote and finally right to self-determination be respected, then our region can move towards greater prosperity and respect of human rights in general.

When it comes to the UN SC resolutions, it should be mentioned that they were adopted during the military phase of the conflict and did not lead to immediate cease of hostilities due to the position of Azerbaijan, which made continuous attempts to impose forceful solution of the issue. Today after more than 20 years of ceasefire Azerbaijan refers to single element of resolutions by downplaying all others such as lift of blockade or neglecting parties of the conflict referred in the resolutions. All the UN SC Resolutions have clearly recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as a party to the conflict. If Azerbaijan is willing to implement the UN SC resolutions it should first and foremost reach authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh in achieving progress in conflict resolution.

There was a point on the inability of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to bring us towards conflict resolution. The argument that years have passed and no solution was made is not a valid one. In our view, continued and recently escalated attacks against Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship is an attack against conflict resolution. Aside of being unfair and incorrect those allegations serve as excuse for Azerbaijan for rejecting proposals of the agreed format particularly those aimed at consolidating ceasefire. Those allegations undermine the preparation of the population to the peace since they entail false accusation on the prejudices at identity and religious level.

In its efforts to discredit the Co-chair countries the president of Azerbaijan recently even attempted to introduce religious dimension into the conflict. In fact he accused Co-Chair countries of being Islamophobic, which is a very dangerous and false manipulation. The positions of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh coincide with the proposals of the Co-Chair countries not because we are Christians, but because we believe that there is no alternative to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The main obstacle towards conflict resolution is not position of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh or OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. It is Azerbaijani policy and actions which impede the progress in peaceful resolution. The consistent policy of Azerbaijan to change the balance between parties to the conflict undermines the peace process. Azerbaijani leadership explicitly referred to the necessity of resolving Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through enhancing its military and economic capacities and capabilities and thus imposing its will over Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Last year was a missed opportunity for the process of peaceful settlement, as we had to tackle consequences of military provocations along the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and the state border. Azerbaijan resorted to massive ceasefire violations

through expanded use of heavy weapons and subversive actions. It has rejected all proposals aimed at consolidating ceasefire including withdrawal of snipers and establishment of investigative mechanism under the pretext that these confidence and security building measures can consolidate the status quo.

There is a certain distortion of notions in this claim. Armenia is eager to go beyond the status quo which should be an outcome of negotiated and peaceful settlement. The ceasefire consolidation will create conditions for peaceful and negotiated settlement and thus it does not promote the status quo but the opposite. In escalating situation, Azerbaijan is responsible for the maintaining the current status quo.

Strengthening OSCE permanent presence in the conflict zone will be another indication of willingness of the parties to resolve the conflict exclusively through peaceful means. There is a contradiction in Azerbaijani rhetoric of the need of more OSCE involvement in the conflict resolution and consistent policy of downgrading the Office of the PRCiO. This is yet another manifestation of non-constructive attitude towards OSCE mechanisms related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

As for the OSCE Minsk group, the OSCE Co-Chair countries showed strong coherence in their policy of arriving to peaceful and negotiated settlement together. In this important international undertaking they managed to put aside their own controversies and pursue their mandate in constructive and united manner. Unfortunately, not every OSCE pS showed similar responsibility and they were not able to resist the temptation to use Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in their wider geopolitical confrontation. The case of Turkey is very illustrative in this regard.

Armenia has already referred to the Azerbaijani attempts to score points in other international organizations which are not related to the conflict resolution. Regardless of outcomes, these attempts are futile and can cause unnecessary tensions within societies. For example, the failure to adopt an explicitly provocative resolution on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in PACE triggered very harsh rhetoric from Azerbaijani leadership which is not conducive for conflict resolution.

Armenia will continue to rely on the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs in advancing peaceful resolution. We invite Azerbaijan to join other OSCE participating States and engage in genuine and constructive dialogue on the basis of respect for the OSCE principles, values and commitments as well as endeavour to solve security problems in a peaceful and negotiated way within agreed formats, as it has committed itself in Astana.

And finally, the real willingness of Azerbaijan to cooperate with the OSCE is reflected not only in its hostile attitude towards the OSCE institutions, field operations and agreed formats, but also its readiness to contribute to this Organization. For your information, in real terms Azerbaijan has so far not contributed to the OSCE budget. Throughout years Azerbaijan was receiving more through imposition of local income tax than its entire contribution. On the contrary, the OSCE participating States, including Armenia have regularly subsidized the

Azerbaijani state budget by compensating the income taxes paid to the Government by its citizens. Taking the opportunity of your presence here, we would like to encourage you to raise this issue in Baku.

Thank You.