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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT

**on Violation of Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Freedom of Expression in Turkey as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia, at the 1226th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
May 2, 2019**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council on another case of violation of freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression in Turkey. This question has been raised by several delegations during previous meetings of the Permanent Council.

Today, we would like to refer to the restriction to hold a peaceful assembly at the Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul on 24 April dedicated to the commemoration the victims of the Armenian Genocide at the initiative of the Commission Against Racism and Discrimination of the Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch. The site, which is today an Islamic art museum, is where a group of 235 prominent Armenian figures including members of the Ottoman parliament, religious and community leaders, prominent writers and artists, were rounded up on April 24, 1915, before their deportation and subsequent executions.

Moreover, according to media reports an Armenian activist has been briefly detained by police after publicly speaking about the Armenian Genocide, which is yet another clear evidence of violation of freedom of expression by the Turkish state.

The grounds for these restrictions are closely related to the policy of denialism pursued by Turkey. However, this year this policy was manifested in unprecedented hostile manner. On April 24, the very day of the commemoration of the 104th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the President of Turkey made an insulting and deplorable

reference to the victims of the Genocide as “Armenian gangs and their supporters”. He went so shockingly far as to justify the Armenian genocide, planned and perpetrated by the Ottoman government as “relocation”, which he defined as “the most reasonable act”. Intentionally or unintentionally, wittingly or unwittingly, this statement effectively attests to the intent to destroy in whole or in part the Armenian population of the Ottoman Turkey, a national, ethnical and religious group as defined by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Mr. Chairman,

Armenia and the Armenian people around the world resolutely denounced the denigration of the victims and justification of actions of the genocidal Government of Ottoman Empire as a conspicuous act of incitement to hatred and perpetration of new atrocity crimes, a demonstration of the incapacity and failure of responsibility of the government of Turkey to protect populations from genocide and a threat to international and regional peace, security and stability. Turkey’s policies and actions of denial and justification manifest flagrant subversion of the fight against impunity for atrocity crimes, promoting accountability, reconciliation and prevention of genocide. They undermine the important efforts of the international community to prevent situations in which the crime of genocide could be committed or re-committed.

Armenia urges the international community to strongly condemn the insult and injury to the memory and dignity of the victims of Genocide and their survivors. In this context I would like to express the gratitude of the Armenian people for all those who stand by the dignity and memory of the victims particularly for the recent declarations, decisions and initiatives undertaken by number of the parliaments and Government of the OSCE participating states dedicated to the commemoration of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. The irresponsible actions once again remind that through remembrance and dignifying the victims, through raising the awareness on horror of genocide the international community can prevent future atrocities and crimes against humanity.

We call on authority of Turkey to immediately stop denigrating the victims of the Armenian genocide and to refrain from violating freedom of assembly and freedom of expression of those who seek realization of their rights.

Thank you.