



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1144th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
4 May 2017**

on the issue of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan took note of the statement by the Chairman-in-Office and regrets over the failure to reach consensus on extension of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The position of Azerbaijan on the subject matter has been presented on numerous occasions and can be consulted through our statements. Nevertheless, I would like to reiterate the following points for the record.

The situation we face today is a grim manifestation of the crisis management capacity of the OSCE. Failure to respond to the legitimate concerns of the OSCE participating State had elevated a technical problem to the level of crisis.

Over the last three years, Azerbaijan has consistently raised its concerns over the de-mining related activities of the OSCE Office in Yerevan and called to address its concerns. The information from the public sources, primarily from Armenian ones, that we presented to OSCE as well as information received from the Office in Yerevan on 8 December 2016, provides sufficient and convincing evidence attesting that i) the demining-related activity of the Office is directly related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and that ii) the geographic scope of the activities of the recipients of assistance from the Office extends to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

I would like to stress that the Republic of Azerbaijan has been committed to engage constructively with a view to finding a solution to the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. Back in December 2016, we accepted as a compromise that a Chairmanship directive issued with proper OSCE reference number and distributed to all participating States could be a way out of current impasse. However, the Chairmanship refused to put an OSCE reference number on this guidance and distribute it to all participating States in a spirit of transparency and joint ownership that we thought we have in the Organisation.

Tolerance to open hostage-taking and blackmailing by Armenia further complicated the situation. Rather than working with Azerbaijan to address our concerns and swiftly put in place appropriate safeguards and reassurances that would prevent reoccurrence of such deplorable situation in the future, preference was given to cover up the violation of the mandate by asserting that the demining-related assistance is within the scope of the mandate of the Office. To underline, this has happened against the background of the official

information provided by the Office in Yerevan that its demining-related assistance is directly related to the conflict and the primary recipient of this assistance - the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE) - itself confirmed that it has an interest in and is involved in the demining-related activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Such a position created ambiguity with regard to the scope of the mandate of the Office. The Republic of Azerbaijan cannot accept such misinterpretation of the mandate of a field mission, which contradicts the understanding reached at the time of opening of this Office that its mandate will not include activities related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan armed conflict, let alone, cannot extend to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Under these circumstances, the only remaining option to rectify the situation was to bring clarity to the mandate of the Office through an appropriate Permanent Council decision that would stipulate what is a matter of consensus within the Organisation that the OSCE Office in Yerevan is not entitled to be involved in any activity related to the conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference and its settlement process. Azerbaijan submitted its proposal on a draft Permanent Council decision and was ready to engage constructively on this issue.

As a result of intensive consultations with the Chairmanship and in light of the visit by the former Federal President of Austria Heinz Fischer to Armenia and Azerbaijan in April 2017, as a compromise, we, in principle, agreed to support the draft Permanent Council decision proposed by the Austrian Chairmanship. The draft decision would have extended the mandate of the Office in Yerevan, while identifying on substance the scope and geographic limits for activities and assistance of the Office. If adopted, this decision would have reaffirmed that activities of the OSCE Office in Yerevan are confined exclusively to the territory of the Republic of Armenia and in no way can include any matter related to the conflict dealt with by the Minsk Conference and its settlement process.

Readiness to join consensus on the Permanent Council decision proposed by the Chairmanship is a goodwill of Azerbaijan, whose territories have been under occupation by neighbouring Armenia, to allow for the continuation of the functioning of the OSCE Office in that country.

However, the stance of the Delegation of Armenia clearly showed that it is not genuinely interested in finding a compromised solution to the issue, which has been clear for Azerbaijan from day one; and, instead, stick to its notorious unconstructive and uncompromised position. Otherwise, it is simply incomprehensible that after all these months of consultations, when we thought that the agreement is finally within reach, Armenia, among other things, started to insist on a particular naming of the conflict, which long time ago was resolved within OSCE in a compromised manner. Obviously, by bringing the naming issue back on the agenda, which cannot be resolved, Armenia deliberately undermined the remaining slim chances to resolve this situation.

The Republic of Azerbaijan went a long way to arrive at this compromised solution and we regret that there is no consensus on the draft decision of the Permanent Council.

I request this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.