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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1194th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
30 August 2018**

*in response to H.E. Mr. Enzo Moavero Milanesi,
Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy*

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan warmly welcomes the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, H.E. Mr. Enzo Moavero Milanesi to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his insightful address.

Azerbaijan and Italy enjoy strategic partnership relations. Recent successful visit to Azerbaijan by the President of Italy and agreements reached in this regard has further strengthened and expanded our cooperation. In this context, development of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) is of strategic importance to diversify gas delivery routes and establish direct energy and transport links with the European Union. We highly appreciate strong political will and continued support of our partners for timely completion of this landmark project.

Existing conflicts in the OSCE area remain the most serious threat to peace and security. Challenges emanating from these conflicts require consistent efforts aimed at strengthening internal law-based order. The fundamental principle of inadmissibility of use of force for acquisition of territory and ensuing obligation of non-recognition of situations resulting from serious violations of international law must be applied and enforced universally and unconditionally, because these are obligations as well as necessary basis for international law-based order and effective multilateralism.

Back in early 90s, the Italian diplomacy has played significant role in laying solid ground for resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. As a result, important documents were adopted within the OSCE Minsk Group defining the format of negotiations and the parameters of the resolution. These fundamental documents, which have been endorsed by the UNSC relevant Resolutions, provide the framework for the Minsk Group Co-Chairs and must be applied in practice by the OSCE.

We welcome enhanced dialogue between the OSCE Secretariat, executive institutions and individual participating States taking into account needs, priorities and potential of each country on the basis of respect for relevant OSCE decisions and documents. In this context, cooperation with the OSCE in such important areas as development of regional and trans-regional transit corridors and enhancing economic connectivity is of particular interest for Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan strongly supports focus of the Italian Chairmanship on countering all forms of racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination, including those based on religious grounds. In this regard, it is important to highlight the necessity of fulfilling Basel tasking to strengthen OSCE's capacities in combating tolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions.

We further highlight the need for stronger OSCE response to continued sufferings of millions of forcefully displaced persons in the OSCE area.

In conclusion, we once again thank Distinguished Chairperson-in-Office for his valuable address and assure him and his able team of constructive engagement of the Azerbaijani Delegation ahead of Milan Ministerial Council.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.