



## Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

### 1046<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council

26<sup>th</sup> March 2015

#### *Situation in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the issue of missing persons caused by conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

As one of the most tragic consequences of the conflict, thousands of persons, including civilian women, children and elderly remain missing. According to the estimates of the State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the fate of close to 4500 Azerbaijanis is unknown.

The issue of missing persons continues to cause serious suffering for their families, fuels tension in the region and hampers efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. It goes without saying that humanitarian issues, such as the issue of missing persons should not be treated as a political tool or a bargaining chip and consequently, should not be dependent on the political settlement of the conflict.

The right to know the fate of missing relatives is a fundamental right of the families concerned and must be guaranteed. It has been firmly entrenched in international humanitarian law, as well as customary international law that each party to the armed conflict should take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing as a result of armed conflict, and to provide their family members with any information it has on their fate.

In this context, it is of deep regret that Armenia refuses to implement the agreement reached at the Presidential Summit held in Paris in October 2014, on the initiative of the President of the French Republic. At this meeting, the sides agreed to exchange data on missing persons and to establish direct cooperation between relevant authorities of the two countries under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross for the solution of the problem

The Azerbaijani side is of firm opinion that implementation of the agreement reached in Paris could be a significant step towards alleviating the sufferings of thousands of people that still wait for information on the whereabouts of their relatives. Earliest solution to this humanitarian problem could also be an important measure contributing to confidence between the parties to the conflict and creating conducive environment for negotiations on peaceful settlement of the conflict to proceed.

Azerbaijan strongly urges the Armenian side to honor its obligations with regard to respecting the norms of international humanitarian law and demonstrate its alleged commitment to peaceful resolution of the conflict with practical steps. Likewise, we renew our call on the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group and OSCE participating States to exert due pressure on Armenia in this direction.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.