



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

1053rd Meeting of the Permanent Council,

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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 ongoing practice of the Republic of Armenia to illegally change the demographic composition of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Illegally transfer of persons of Armenian descent to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, especially to the occupied Lachin and Kelbajar regions, which had only few Armenians before the occupation serves to overall objective of the Armenian side to consolidate the status-quo created through illegal use of force against territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and impose a *fait accompli* solution to the conflict. The fact-finding mission dispatched to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in 2005 under the auspices of the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group concluded, *inter alia*, that “prolonged continuation of this situation [illegal settlement] could lead to a *fait accompli* that would seriously complicate the peace process”.

The settlement of Armenians in the occupied territories runs contrary to the norms of the international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Convention on Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, which prohibits the occupying power to change demographic composition, social, physical and historical character of the occupied territories. Moreover, the resettlement policy of Armenia grossly violates the rights of hundred thousands of Azerbaijanis forcefully expelled from the occupied territories, and aims at creating a human shield against their return.

It is of serious concern that illegal transfer of Armenians to the occupied territories has been significantly intensified in the light of ongoing crisis in Syria. In its special report of 2013 on humanitarian crisis in Syria, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly noted that 29 families, roughly 99 Syrian-Armenians were resettled in the occupied Lachin region. According to other sources, including those of Armenia, the number of Syrian-Armenians illegally settled in the occupied Azerbaijani territories is in thousands. The main destinations of settlements are occupied Lachin, Kelbajar and Zangilan regions, where the authorities of Armenia, as well as Armenian Diaspora offer special incentives for new-comers.

Illegal transfer of Armenians to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is a serious challenge to ongoing efforts for finding peaceful solution to the conflict, since it further complicates the already difficult situation in negotiations. It is yet another fact testifying that Armenia is not interested in the settlement of the conflict and instead, intends to consolidate the occupation of internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan disregarding the calls of the international community.

Occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and ethnic cleansing of the local Azerbaijani population does not represent a solution and will never produce outcome desired by Armenia. The sooner Armenia realizes it the better will be chances for peaceful ending of the conflict.

In the light of the above-mentioned, we call on the OSCE participating States, in particular the Chairmanship, the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group and its member-states to take effective measures to stop Armenia's policy of illegal settlements in the occupied territories and persuade Armenia to constructively engage in negotiations for finding solution to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. In this context, we recall the letter addressed to the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in which the Azerbaijani side has requested to organize a fact-finding mission to the occupied territories with a view to addressing the illegal activities therein, including the illegal transfer of population to these territories.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.