



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

1070th 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 the situation in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which constitutes a serious challenge to peace and security in the OSCE area.

Over the first half of the year the Delegation of Azerbaijan has regularly updated the Permanent Council of the alarming developments evolving in the Minsk process as well as on the ground. Many of you are aware that in result of the armed aggression and use of force by Armenia against Azerbaijan close to one fifth of the internationally recognized territory of my country has been under occupation for more than 20 years. Unlike other protracted conflicts in the OSCE area, the occupied Nagorno Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts are ethnically cleansed from Azerbaijanis and since 1988 Azerbaijan hosts more than one million of refugees and IDPs on its territory.

In response to the aggressive actions of Armenia the international community in the strongest terms deplored the use of force against Azerbaijan and occupation of the territories of my country. In 1993 the UN Security Council adopted four resolutions condemning the occupation of Azerbaijani territories and reaffirming respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders. In those resolutions the Security Council also confirmed that the Nagorno Karabakh region is part of Azerbaijan and demanded immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

The issue of occupation of Azerbaijani territories has been one of the first subjects on the agenda of the OSCE even well ahead of its establishment. The Minsk process launched since 1992 so far yielded no result and the conflict remains unresolved until this moment. As the Minsk Group and its Co-chairmen are unable by peaceful means to end this injustice inflicted

upon Azerbaijani people, we more frequently observe attempts to freeze the conflict, rather than to resolve it.

Every initiative suggested by us in the OSCE with a view to improve effectiveness and accountability of the Minsk process mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairmen faces immediate opposition by Armenia. Our appeals to the mediating countries and Minsk Group members to persuade Armenia to do, at least very small steps in Vienna to advance negotiation process lacks the support of OSCE participating States. Such an indifferent attitude demonstrated by the OSCE Minsk Group creates an impression that the OSCE is satisfied with the current status quo in the occupied territories and the major concern is to prevent any further outbreak of hostilities.

There has been hardly a single word of criticism of Armenia for continued occupation of our territories for more than 20 years and for reluctance of Armenia to seriously address any issue related to the conflict resolution in Vienna. The Armenian President openly challenges the territorial integrity and internationally recognized sovereignty of Azerbaijan and through such actions violates fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act and relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. However, it looks like that in view of the Co-chairs that is ok as long as active military hostilities are not taking place. In the same vein, while the co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group put the responsibility to achieve progress in conflict resolution completely on two sides and cannot offer anything better than freezing the status quo, the Minsk Group and other OSCE participating States satisfy themselves only with extending their formal support to the efforts of co-Chairs.

We hear strong support to the resolution of other protracted conflicts in the OSCE area on the basis of sovereignty and internationally recognized territories of conflict-affected countries extended by many OSCE participating States. In the meantime, with the exception of few colleagues, we hardly witness the same principled position by the OSCE Delegations in respect to the resolution of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, despite the fact that on bilateral level all OSCE participating States publicly extended their support to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

Our Delegation wishes to reiterate that calls for introduction of such measures as investigation mechanism, withdrawal of snipers or deployment of OSCE monitors along the line of confrontation in absence of withdrawal of the Armenian troops cannot be considered, because in reality it would mean to surrender to the result of continued use of force by Armenia and occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan. In fact suggesting such measures and extending support to them under continued illegal presence of the Armenian troops in the territories of Azerbaijan is in defiance of the United Nations Security Council resolutions and relevant OSCE decisions, which explicitly demanded to unconditionally, immediately and completely withdraw the occupying troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and called for deployment of the OSCE multinational peacekeeping force. These are the

objectives and sequence of the conflict resolution process. What is required from the mediators and the Minsk Group is to put these objectives as a priority into their agenda and mobilize international pressure on Armenia to end the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan in line with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. As a matter of fact, the co-Chairmen mandate adopted in 1994 commits them to be guided by these four resolutions.

After more than 20 years of negotiations to face such a situation is unreasonable and painful for Azerbaijan. Our people have placed great hopes on this Organization to help us restore the human rights and fundamental freedoms of one million of refugees and IDPs.

In light of all continuous sufferings of our people and our acceptance to make peace with Armenia on the basis of international law, the Delegation of Azerbaijan is prompted to ask the Co-chairing countries, members of the Minsk Group and other OSCE participating States if this situation serves the cause of peace and those who believe in political resolution of the conflict? Or does it serve the interests and aggressive ambitions of the current Armenian government, making them confident that they are above the law and principles that govern this House? I leave it for the Delegations to answer and decide what option suits their interests better, but I still believe that it is in the interests of the OSCE to pursue the implementation of agreements and commitments we all have undertaken.

Azerbaijan remains the most interested party in the achievement of just and durable peace. However, as long as Armenia refuses to withdraw its troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, prevents the return of all displaced population to their homes of origin and the Minsk Group and its co-chairs take no action to persuade Armenia to abide by its commitments and obligations, we are left with no choice but to insist that we will not remain the only side bound to implement the commitments and agreements.

Finally, I suggest the distinguished Ambassador of Armenia to take a constructive approach here in Vienna as it is primarily in the interests of our region and our future generations to move the negotiations forward. I hope that he will seriously consider the challenges to the Minsk process and looking to the future will accept for the entire people of Azerbaijan what he accepts for the people of Armenia.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.