



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

1086th Meeting of the Permanent Council,

21 January 2016

on Holocaust Remembrance Day

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan welcomes Ambassadors Mr. Takacs and Mr. Klein to the Permanent Council and thanks them for insightful presentations.

Azerbaijan officially observes the 27th of January as a Commemoration Day of the Victims of the Holocaust. The series of events held on this occasion demonstrate centuries-old traditions of tolerance and multiculturalism deeply rooted in the life style of Azerbaijani people and represents yet another opportunity for the society to express its solidarity with the Jewish community of the country in firmly rejecting all manifestations of ethnic hatred, intolerance and discrimination.

As racism, xenophobia, ethnic and religious intolerance threaten security and stability of the OSCE area as a whole, it is our firm conviction that the OSCE should redouble its efforts to combat intolerance and discrimination. In this regard, the activities of the Holocaust Remembrance Alliance may, of course have significant contribution.

The firm position of the international community with regard to condemnation of Holocaust and bringing its perpetrators to justice is exemplary for current efforts on strengthening and promoting the rule of law in international relations. Drawing proper conclusions can obviously benefit the efforts to pursue post-conflict justice, especially in those situations where the prevailing culture of impunity for serious crimes, such as acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing represents considerable obstacle to peace and security.

Azerbaijan strongly believes in necessity of properly addressing the egregious violations of international law, including the violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, and providing effective and adequate reparation to their victims. Institutional actions to prevent the recurrence of such violations are undeniable prerequisites for maintenance of international peace and security. We proceed from understanding that protecting and ensuring of rights of the victims, as well as securing international accountability contributes to peace and security.

It is also essential that peace efforts strongly reject *fait accompli* situations and never encourage the acceptance of situations achieved by the unlawful use of force and other egregious violations of international law, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

In situations of protracted armed conflict, the lack of agreement on political issues cannot be used as a pretext for not addressing problems caused by continued and deliberate disrespect for international humanitarian and human rights law. Particular consideration must be given to implications for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts aggravated by population displacements and foreign military occupation. The impact of conflicts on housing, land and property, as well as discrimination on ethnic grounds and forced demographic changes in such situations, require a more consistent approach in order to put an end to illegal practices and policies of settlements in the territories under occupation and to ensure the safe and dignified return of displaced populations to their homes.

In this regard, combating impunity is important not only for the purpose of prosecuting crimes and bringing those responsible to justice, but also to ensure sustainable peace and reconciliation. This should guide our discussions within the OSCE on the issues related to building trust and confidence among the participating States and should be duly taken into account by relevant structures and formats in their efforts on finding durable solution to the conflict situations.

In conclusion, we once again thank our distinguished guest speakers for their presence at the Permanent Council and wish them every success in their future endeavors.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson