



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
1136<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council,  
09 March 2017**

*on the need for substantive negotiations  
for the settlement of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict*

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan would like to draw attention of the Council to the challenges facing the process of settlement of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

*Ironically, the prospect for a breakthrough seemed to be more realistic almost a year ago, than it is now. On 7 April 2016 in Baku, right after two days after cessation of escalation in the conflict zone, the Foreign Minister Lavrov confirmed that “[T]he strengthening of confidence in the conflict zone in no way means that we have to be complacent of the need to find a comprehensive political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict....I agree that practically all components of an agreement are on the table. The question is not even how to place them [in stages], but how to find some formulations, because on substance we are very close [to an agreement]...”*

Apparently, such a hope for progress emerged as a result of discussions of the proposal put forward in 2015. In May and June of 2016 we witnessed an unprecedented intensification of the mediation efforts by co-chairing countries. The sides agreed to expand the existing Office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and to finalize an OSCE investigative mechanism to ceasefire violations. Yet, in St.Petersburg, the investigation mechanism was deferred to a later stage, linked to withdrawal of the Armenian troops from the occupied territories. In Vienna and St.Petersburg the co-chairing countries and both sides agreed to continue negotiations on comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

On 20 July of 2016, Azerbaijan submitted its proposal on expansion of the PR CiO Office to the OSCE Chairmanship based on shared understanding that it will in no way alter its mandate and *modus operandi*. We agreed to intensify its monitoring activities provided that it is synchronized with settlement of the conflict. Thus, Azerbaijan has demonstrated its political will and readiness to implement the measures agreed at high-level meetings held in Vienna and St.Petersburg.

Unfortunately, we are faced with introduction of unacceptable elements such as deployment of OSCE observers to the Line of Confrontation, which is a change of *modus operandi* of PR CiO and not in line with agreements reached at the level of Presidents. In absence of withdrawal of the Armenian troops from the occupied territories such a deployment would lead only to further consolidation of the status quo and prolongation of the conflict.

Azerbaijan cannot accept such a dangerous development in the conflict zone as it contradicts the very purpose of entire Minsk process.

As a result, expansion of the PR CiO Office has not been finalized. Such a situation is abused by Armenia to justify its refusal to engage in substantive discussions and to condition it with implementation of certain measures that in its view would serve to creation of conducive atmosphere.

It should be underlined that even in absence of expansion of PR CiO Office, the situation on the ground was quite calm for several months as ceasefire was generally observed by both sides. Yet, stabilization did not lead to intensification of negotiations. Thus, conducive atmosphere was there, what is absent is political will of leadership of Armenia to engage in negotiations.

As a direct consequence, transforming the understandings reached at high-level meetings in Vienna and St.Petersburg in 2016 into practical steps becomes more elusive.

In principle, attempts to condition substantive negotiations with “creation of conducive atmosphere” runs contrary to the letter and spirit of all basic documents related to the settlement of the conflict. These documents are built on understanding that ceasefire and substantive negotiations must go hand in hand complementing each other. Thus, the Budapest Document of 1994, *inter alia*, “called on the parties to the conflict to enter into intensified substantive talks” and directed the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group to take immediate steps to promote continuation of existing ceasefire and to conduct speedy negotiations for the conclusion of a political agreement, the implementation of which will eliminate the major consequences of the conflict.

Against this background, Armenia’s persistent refusal to engage in substantive negotiations is accompanied by provocative actions on the ground. The revanchist public statements by its senior political-military leadership, misuse of internal electoral cycle to mobilize support for its uncompromising position, intensified military exercises and build-up in the conflict zone and subsequent military provocations along the LoC are clear indications that Armenia is not interested in the settlement of the conflict.

Armenia pursues the objective of freezing the status-quo of occupation either through deployment of OSCE observers under guise of confidence-building or attempting to aggravate the situation on the ground to such a degree to create pretext for external intervention. Both scenarios, if realized, will have a spill-over effect with devastating consequences for entire region, and will seriously undermine prospects of peace.

Azerbaijan reiterates that it will not tolerate the attempts of freezing the situation with a view to imposing a *fait accompli*. As it was stated by our Delegation at previous meeting of the Permanent Council on 2 March 2017, “one can hardly expect that strengthening of the ceasefire regime will be helpful to resolution of the conflict, until negotiations resume and measures of strengthening are synchronized and linked with corresponding stages of political negotiations. Azerbaijan views these two parallel tracks of the peace processes as complementing each other and unifying”.

Despite all difficulties, Azerbaijan continues to believe that prospects for peaceful resolution of the conflict has not been exhausted. UN Security Council resolutions, decisions and

documents of the OSCE form the mandate and basis for proposals developed by the Co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, which are aimed at eliminating the consequences of the conflict on stage-by-stage basis. Withdrawal of occupying forces followed by restoration and rehabilitation of these lands for allowing the return of displaced population in safety and dignity will create objective conditions for definition of a self-rule for both communities of the Nagorno-Karabakh region within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Continued refusal by Armenia to engage into substantive negotiations accompanied by the actions on the ground is obvious demonstration that it is not interested to accept this stage-by-stage change of the status quo. However, this constitutes the only viable option for peaceful resolution of the conflict. Instead of publicly declaring the imminent threat of resumption of war, the President of Armenia must prepare its public for peace and withdrawal from the occupied territories. The co-chairing countries must reverse this trend for the sake of preventing a failure of the peace process.

Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group need to intensify their efforts towards realization of tasks reflected in their mandate, guided by relevant UN Security Council resolutions, which, first and foremost, demand immediate, unconditional and complete withdrawal of occupying forces from Azerbaijani territories.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.