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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1155th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
20 July 2017**

in response to reports by Ambassadors Martin Sajdik and Ertugrul Apakan

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Azerbaijan joins previous speakers in warmly welcoming Ambassadors Sajdik and Apakan to the Permanent Council and thanks them for comprehensive briefings.

Deteriorating security situation in the East of Ukraine is the source of serious concern. The conflict requires continued international and regional efforts towards de-escalation and finding a peaceful and negotiated solution in accordance with international law based on full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine.

We strongly support the resolution of all conflicts through political dialogue on the basis of the aforementioned principles. In situations of armed conflict or political crisis, no solution can be reached if it is inconsistent with international law, particularly where fundamental norms are concerned, such as the obligation to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. We believe that the strict observance of these norms and the fulfillment in good faith of the obligations assumed by States are of utmost importance for promoting dialogue and cooperation in the OSCE area.

In this context, we are of the view that the Minsk Agreements remains to be the most viable way for bringing peace to Ukraine. We call on all sides to implement in good faith their obligations under the Minsk Agreements and refrain from actions that could further deteriorate the situation on the ground. In this respect, we underline the importance of ensuring safety of the SMM personnel and creating all necessary conditions to discharge their functions without any undue restrictions. We call on the sides to constructively engage in negotiations within the Trilateral Contact Group and its sub-groups.

In conclusion, we once again thank Ambassador Sajdik and Ambassador Apakan for their presence at the Permanent Council and wish to confirm our support to them in their important work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.