



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1108th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
14 July 2016**

in response to H.E. Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan warmly welcomes H.E. Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria to the Permanent Council and thanks him for comprehensive presentation on Austria's Chairmanship priorities for 2017.

Austria will take up Chairmanship helm of in a very challenging time, when the OSCE suffers from Organization-wide crisis of trust and confidence. Ongoing violations of the Helsinki Principles, in particular those related to respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the States, as well as failure to demonstrate principled position in all protracted conflicts, attempts to misinterpret or selectively apply the Helsinki Final Act principles lie at the core of current crisis.

Security and stability of the OSCE region are under growing pressure of numerous threats stemming from terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization, forceful displacement of people due to conflicts and occupation of territories, as well as political-military turmoil in neighboring regions. Rising trend of intolerance and discrimination, especially on the ground of ethnicity and religion, such as Islamophobia challenges our common future. Xenophobic public rhetoric and discriminatory restrictive policies by some participating is a source of serious concern.

At this critical juncture, the OSCE as the only pan-European security arrangement is to facilitate genuine dialogue among its participating States with a view to elaboration of effective measures to tackle the threats and challenges in all three dimensions.

Unresolved conflicts in the territories of the OSCE participating States necessitates urgent coordinated action to find earliest resolution. Status-quo in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict created in the result of illegal use of force and occupation of Azerbaijan's territories is unacceptable. The military occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan does not represent a solution and will never produce a political outcome desired by Armenia. The situation must be changed without further delay.

We welcome an unprecedented intensification of negotiations arranged by Co-chairing countries over last months. Recent high-level discussions in Vienna and St.Petersburg were substantive and productive. The Azerbaijani side hopes that understandings reached in these meetings will be swiftly implemented.

A step-by-step solution to the conflict suggested by the Russian Federation is the only viable option for peaceful settlement of the conflict. This approach is based on the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and reflected in the decisions of the OSCE, notably in the Budapest Summit decision of 1994.

For the unacceptable status-quo to change, occupying forces must be withdrawn from the Azerbaijani territories. This will allow restoration of regional transportation and communication links and creation of conditions for safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their places of origin. Implementation of these measures in a stage-by-stage manner will ensure peaceful co-existence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of the Nagorno-Karabakh region within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. There is no other way to resolve this conflict peacefully.

In this context, we underline the necessity for the OSCE and its participating States to contribute to the solution of the conflict with all the measures at their disposal. To this end, the OSCE should re-establish its ownership over the mediation efforts; ensure that mediation takes place within normative and legal frameworks set first of all by the norms and principles of international law and the OSCE documents and decisions and agreed mandates. OSCE should also ensure compliance by Participating States with their obligations and commitments, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. Full utilization of the potential of the Minsk Group is a necessary step. In parallel, the OSCE has a unique role to play in crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation through its High-Level Planning Group. In this regard, we underline the necessity to safeguard and further strengthen organization's capacities in this field by civilian and police components.

At the same time, negotiations on settlement of the conflict should not be misused as a pretext to prevent the OSCE from seeking to address numerous consequences of the conflicts in all three dimensions of comprehensive security. The issue of IDPs is of particular relevance in this regard. Lack of adequate attention to the problems of IDPs, in particular restoration of their rights is a departure from our existing human dimension commitments, and we encourage the incoming Chairmanship to closely look into possibilities to rectify the situation.

We welcome the intention of incoming Chairmanship to continue current German Chairmanship's initiative to revitalize the role of economic and environmental dimensions. Promotion of sustainable economic connectivity can be instrumental for improving of atmosphere for dialogue and cooperation. Intra- and trans-regional transportation links, establishment and restoration of infrastructure can also be a valuable tool for generating incentives in the context of conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.

There is an acute need for promoting partnership among business communities both at public and private levels. Elaboration of set of rules governing economic activities of States and private entities can serve improving conditions for rules-based cooperation in the OSCE area and restoring trust and confidence across the OSCE region. We encourage the incoming Chairmanship to initiate discussions among the OSCE participating States and relevant executive structures towards elaboration of such a code.

Elaboration and adoption of principles governing journalistic activity, especially in conflict zones is of equal importance. We recall the tasking of Brussels and Madrid Ministerial Councils on adoption of voluntary professional standards by journalists, media self-regulation and other appropriate mechanisms for ensuring increased professionalism, accuracy and adherence to ethical standards among journalists and encourage the incoming Chairmanship to step up efforts in that direction together with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

In conclusion, we once again thank Distinguished Minister for his address and wish him and his able team every success in their efforts to chair our organization.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.