



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1136th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
09 March 2017

in response to the Delegation of Armenia

Mr. Chairperson,

I want to exercise my right of reply in response to allegations made by representative of Armenia and I will start in the order as he raised them.

Firstly, rejection by Azerbaijan to implement the Vienna and St.Peterburg agreements. In our previous intervention under the previous agenda item we explained that in Vienna and St. Petersburg there were four elements, which were agreed at the level of Presidents and the co-chairing countries' representatives: 1) expansion of the Office of the PR CiO; 2) to finalize investigative mechanism; 3) to exchange data on missing persons; 4) continue substantive negotiations. These were the four agreements, which the Presidents identified.

As far as the first element is concerned, I wish to draw your attention to our proposal, which was communicated to the Chairmanship. This has never been discussed, has never been put for consideration of delegations. I do not know why Azerbaijan is to be blamed for. On the contrary, Azerbaijan went to additional compromises and agreed to increase the number of addition personnel from six to seven. Still, we are blamed for not joining consensus. Consensus could emerge on the basis of discussions. But, it cannot be based on "take it or leave it" approach towards the paper, which was presented to us. So, if there is no interest to discuss the issue, it is not us to be blamed. That is someone else, who has to take responsibility.

Secondly, on investigation mechanism. In St. Petersburg, the three presidents decided to defer this matter to future consideration. If the Delegation of Armenia in Vienna is not informed about it, I suggest them to consult their capital or the mediating country, which arranged that round of consultations.

The third element is exchange of data on missing persons. Here, contrary to allegations of Armenia, we are ready to go ahead. The problem is that the Armenian side is not willing to open up the data in affected territories, where missing people were potentially buried. We have communicated to ICRC the DNAs of all those missing persons and their number is close to 5000. Their remains could be potentially found in the conflict zone. We expect the Armenian side not to put political conditions, such as cooperation with agents of the separatist regime. If Armenia is interested, if it is willing to take responsibility for finding those remains, we can go ahead.

Finally, the last point is substantive negotiations, which are necessary and which we have agreed to. Since June 2016, there has been no meeting. Every time the Armenian leadership refuses to meet. The only opportunity was informal session of co-Chairmen with ministers, last time it was in Hamburg and Munich. Again, it was not a real discussion.

For us, our conscience is clear, we have implemented the Vienna and St.Petersburg agreements. And we are ready to go ahead to take further steps.

But, we do not see lack of implementation of measures agreed in Vienna and St.Petersburg as major impediment, since they are technical elements. Although these technical elements have not been realized, since April until December there was relative calm on the LoC. Whatever favorable conditions or whatever integrity that the Armenian representative is looking for in Azerbaijan's position was in place on the ground.

But, it was the Armenian side that asked for a time-out in negotiations and refuses to return to the table. The Armenian representative should at least be fair in what he is saying. It was the Armenian President, who requested a time-out due to election cycle and it is Armenia that refuses to engage in substantive negotiations.

There were some other allegations in the statement of the Armenian representative, which I want to clarify. The Armenian representative claimed that Azerbaijan confuses itself and the Permanent Council. On the contrary, our statements are on the web-site of our Delegation and in the archives of the OSCE. I would not encourage him to interpret them. It is better to concentrate on your own policy and your own actions. You should not be engaged in entertaining yourself and the community with misinterpreting the Azerbaijani statements.

Azerbaijan has no maximalist demands. Azerbaijan's position is based on UN Security Council resolutions. Is it something that is owned by Azerbaijan?! No. Azerbaijan suggests to work on the basis of international law, the Helsinki Final Act and those decisions and documents, which the OSCE has adopted. We cannot accept your preconditions to them. As you said, there are five statements by the Presidents of co-chairing countries, which we also support, and we are ready to work on the basis of them. But, we do not accept precondition from your side.

Finally, on the title of the agenda item raised by our Delegation, which is "*need for substantive negotiations for the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict*". This title does not exclude the population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. On the contrary, it seeks to find peace and comfort for that population. This population, unlike Armenia sees it, consists of two parts, which are the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities. Both of them are citizens of Azerbaijan.

But, Armenia sees only Armenian part of the population and does not allow the Azerbaijani community to return to their homes. Armenia suggests defining a status under current circumstances based on ethnic cleansing. This is contrary to logic of humanity and democratic principles in general. People who used to live in those territories have equal rights with those who are still in these territories. They have to return back to their homes and start defining their common future in this region. We do not exclude, nor do we deny existence of the Armenian community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

We say that the region should be de-militarized and Armenia must exclude the military factor from the region before discussing political issues. If you manage to do it, it will be for the benefit of Armenians of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. They would have better chances to solve problems in a peaceful manner with Azerbaijanis of the region. We will not allow it to happen on the basis of ethnic cleansing of the Azerbaijani population. This is what Azerbaijan is trying to ensure.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman