



## **Press Release on extension of mandates of OSCE field presences**

Vienna, 27 January 2016- As it was reported in December of 2016, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OSCE, proceeding from its legitimate concerns, protested against the demining-related activities carried out by the OSCE Office in Yerevan over last years. Majority of the OSCE interlocutors during consultations identified the demining-related activities of the Office as clear violations of the mandate. The Yerevan Office cannot be involved in any activities related to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including to process of settlement of the conflict, as this interferes with the responsibilities of the OSCE Minsk Group. Therefore, the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan requested taking adequate measures to bring the activities of the OSCE Office in Yerevan in line with its mandate.

In response to the legitimate concerns of the Azerbaijani side, on 31 December of 2016, Armenia, following its regular habit of hostage taking, blocked, with no argument, extension of relevant mandates of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, OSCE Centre in Bishkek, OSCE Observers to two Russian Checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian Border as well as Decision on the revision of the 2016 OSCE Unified Budget. Such a blackmailing by Armenia made these critically important OSCE Missions dysfunctional, contingent upon its whims and about to close. Only today, that, after the Foreign Minister Nalbandyan was called to Vienna for urgent consultations with the OSCE Chairmanship and Secretary General, the Armenian side was forced to withdraw its unsubstantiated block over relevant decisions.

Yet, Armenia continues its blackmailing policy to impose its position on OSCE with a view to misuse the Office in Yerevan, as the host country. Consequently, violations of mandate by the OSCE Office in Yerevan remain unaddressed and its operational activities had been suspended.

Azerbaijan's position remains constructive and principled based on the apparent necessity to ensure that activities of the Yerevan Office are transparent and accountable to OSCE and conducted in line with the mandate. The Permanent Mission expresses its hope that the OSCE will overcome yet another challenge by Armenia in solidarity and unity without compromising its principles, shared values and commitments.