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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1133rd Meeting of the Permanent Council,
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*in response to the Secretary-General, the European Union
and the United States America
on the issue of extension of mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan*

Mr. Chairperson,

In response to the comments of the Secretary-General, as well as statements delivered by Malta also on behalf of the EU and aligned countries, and the United States of America, I would like to stress the following.

First of all, I reject all the blames and accusations addressed to Azerbaijan. I regret that the issue related to the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan has been elevated to such a crisis level that seriously affected trust we put on the Chairmanship and others within the Organization. During series of consultations over the past months, our Delegation was informed of violations of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan from different angles. We have been informed that violation of the mandate even goes beyond the scope identified by Azerbaijan and includes certain managerial and organizational aspects of the work of the OSCE field mission. Against this background, it is of extreme disappointment that the situation continues to be addressed in a discriminatory manner with a view to putting the blame on Azerbaijan.

Throughout past months Azerbaijan took constructive position hoping for finding a solution to the matter. Unfortunately, it was not reciprocated by the participating State that hosts the field mission. Instead, that Delegation opted for open blackmailing and blocked the mandates of other field missions. Yet, we have not seen any statement by those delegations which took the floor today condemning such inadmissible actions by Armenia. This casts doubt on sincerity of these delegations and demonstrates lack of constructive engagement on their part to help solve the current stalemate.

Clearly, we do not see green light at the end of tunnel with regard to the solution of the issue, until we put an end to misinterpretation and abuse of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. We do not trust to the Head of the Office and we do not see authority in the Chairmanship, as well as in the Delegations, which spoke today, to impose the position that activities of the Office are in line with its mandate. This is the responsibility of the Council to decide upon.

We do not want to go further in investigating the matter. There is mistrust to the Office and it may continue to engage into activities related to the conflict between Armenia and

Azerbaijan. This should be rectified with amendments to its mandate indicating that the Office is not entitled to be involved in any activity related to the conflict. This will be a clear signal to the Office and the host-country to refrain from misusing the OSCE field mission.

Our Head of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have been conveying this principled position of Azerbaijan to the Chairmanship, the Secretary-General and other interested participating States. Yet, we do not see readiness to engage in discussions to solve the issue and prevent the host-country to use ambiguity in its interests interfering with the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group.

I do not understand why it is not acceptable for the OSCE to bring such clarity to the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. I urge the Delegations, which spoke on the matter today to give a reason for such unwillingness.

The mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan was adopted by all 57 participating States and it is their collective right to assess conformity of activities of the mission. Our assessment on violation of the mandate is based on information we received directly from the Office. In response to our inquiry, the Office admitted that de-mining related activity aimed at supporting activities of the Armenian Center for Humanitarian De-mining and Expertise in the territories along the border with Azerbaijan. These territories were contaminated with mines and UXOs in the course of Armenia's military actions against Azerbaijan in early 1990s and thus, the concerned project of the Office is clearly related to the conflict.

We do not have possibility to check the geographic scope of Office's activities and rely on information shared by the Office itself. And this information testifies that its post-conflict rehabilitation activities go beyond its mandate, since it interferes with responsibilities of the OSCE Minsk Process.

In parallel, according to the Armenian media, implementing partner of the Center, which received assistance from the OSCE Office in Yerevan, appeared in the occupied territories and publicly praised de-mining activities in those territories to make possible for resettlement of Armenians. The territories under question are occupied Lachin and Kelbajar regions located between the Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, and they are used by the Armenian Government for resettlement of Armenians. This was already confirmed in 2005 and 2010 respectively by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen. Close to 14 000 Armenians had been illegally resettled in these regions.

It is already 3 years that our Delegation has been raising concerns over this programmatic activity of the Office and we are fed up with a lack of clarity with regard to the mandate of the Office and apparent attempts to abuse this situation against legitimate interests of Azerbaijan. This should be stopped.

Until the limits for activities of the OSCE Office in Yerevan in all three dimensions clarified through decision of the Permanent Council, we will not join consensus on the extension of its mandate.

Thank you.