



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1135th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
02 March 2017**

*large-scale military provocation by the armed forces of Armenia
in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

Mr. Chairperson,

On February 25th Armenia used large-scale military force against the Azerbaijani positions in several directions of the Line of Confrontation, which led to loss of human lives of six Azerbaijani servicemen. Our Delegation distributed relevant verbal note describing the official statements of the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the matter.

This provocation should not be seen an isolated or sporadic act. It is part of a broader policy of the current Armenian regime that should be viewed in the context of recent and evolving perspective. The offensive pursued the goal of creating explosive situation on the ground with a view to undermining the efforts towards political solution of the conflict. I would like to underline that the situation seriously deteriorated just a week after another round of meetings of Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group with both sides in Munich on 18 February 2017.

Despite numerous calls of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, UN Secretary General and other international structures, Armenia, since summer of 2016, refuses to engage in substantive talks on resolution of the conflict. It is apparent that in absence of meaningful negotiations and lack of pressure to withdraw from the occupied territories, Armenia feels comfortable, enjoys the impunity and spares no effort to consolidate the status quo of occupation.

In spite of public condemnation and non-acceptance by entire international community of the so-called “referendum on constitutional changes” in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, Armenian leadership conducted this illegitimate initiative. Such a provocative step is clear manifestation that Armenia is not interested in seeking a political settlement of the armed conflict and attempts to impose a *fait accompli* solution in the territories it ethnically cleansed from Azerbaijanis.

Over last months the Armenian senior political-military leadership has been creating expectation in Armenian society by making public promises that positions lost as a consequence of last year April escalation will be re-taken from Azerbaijan. Levon Mnatsakanyan, Commander of the Armenian forces deployed in the occupied territories,

speaking about the losses suffered by Armenia in last April inferred that "I don't think that the losses are irretrievable. I believe we'll still have a chance to regain our lost positions".

President Sargsyan attempted to mobilize support of Armenian society by publicly putting blame on Azerbaijan for provocations that due to his predictions would be instigated in the conflict zone in view of upcoming electoral cycle. Thus, on 18th February at the 11th Convention of the "Homeland Defenders Voluntary Union" and on 20th February at the operative meeting of the leadership of the Armed Forces of Armenia, the Armenian President announced that Azerbaijan allegedly will use the upcoming parliamentary elections in Armenia to "make certain provocations".

Such revanchist rhetoric of the Armenian leadership, who personally observed military exercises in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, has been accompanied by intensified illegal military build-up in the conflict zone. As we informed the Council previously, in defiance of the agreement reached in Moscow on 5 April 2016, Armenia refuses to withdraw heavy artillery and combat vehicles from the LoC. On the contrary, reconnaissance information of the Azerbaijani side indicated serious intensification of reinforcements and concentration of forces and equipment in the segments of the LoC, where actual provocations took place on February 25.

Armenia continues to create further impediments to peace process through its multifaceted illegal activities in the occupied territories. The scope and nature of these activities was presented to the OSCE community on numerous occasions, including in relevant report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.

All these facts prove that current Armenian regime since last April has been preparing the ground for provocation of February 25th. Such unacceptable actions of Armenia must be stopped and reversed. Prolongation of the situation will inevitably lead to escalation of the conflict and failure of the peace process.

Azerbaijan urges OSCE participating States and OSCE Minsk Group to exert pressure on Armenia to stop undermining prospects of political settlement of conflict and engage her in substantive negotiations without further delay.

Thank you.