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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
2017 Annual Security Review Conference**

***Working session II: Conflict and crisis situations in the OSCE area: building
security and confidence***

Mme. Moderator,

The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan thanks distinguished keynote speakers for their presentations. We are pleased to see discussions on conflicts included into the agenda of the ASRC and commend the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship for its efforts to make this happen.

Building security and restoration of confidence within the OSCE area is impossible without comprehensively addressing the existing conflicts. We support the efforts of the Austrian Chairmanship towards finding sustainable solution to the conflicts based on the principles and norms of international law.

We would have expected the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference to be part of today's discussions and share their assessment on challenges facing the settlement process of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. We deeply regret over their absence today. Instead of putting themselves aside from the OSCE community or above the organization, which entrusted them very important mandate, the Co-Chairmen should be accountable to the participating States. We urge them to carefully study exchange of views of the participating States and integrate into their mediating activities, which must be discharged on the basis of international law, as well as decisions and documents adopted in this framework, particularly, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and Budapest Summit Document of 1994.

Threats posed by the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict are of multi-dimensional character and affect all three dimensions. Armenia is responsible for internationally wrongful acts, several of which constitute serious breaches of obligations arising from peremptory norms of general international law. These include, most notably: (1) the use of force against the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan in order to impose the de facto secession of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the other districts of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act; (2) the ensuing violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan; (3) racial discrimination and change of the demographic composition of those territories through ethnic cleansing of the occupied territories and illegal settlements; (4) illegal economic and other activities; and (6) the destruction of the cultural heritage of the region.

The gravity of violations of international law by Armenia necessitates immediate action by the international community to remove these serious breach of peace, including through imposition of sanctions on this country to compel it to withdraw its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and initiating judicial proceedings to bring to justice the perpetrators of war crimes, acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and other violations of international humanitarian law.

Despite such a responsibility stemming from international law, the prevailing trend we observe within the Organization is merely to “defuse” the conflict. Lowering the intensity of armed conflicts without engaging the sides into substantive result-oriented negotiations does not represent a solution, as it has been proved by more than two-decade experience of the Minsk process. Attempts to freeze the *status-quo* of occupation, be it through systematic efforts on the ground or appeasing the aggressor are equally unacceptable, counterproductive and very dangerous.

The terms of “neutrality” or “impartiality”, which indeed lie at the core of a mediating activity can by no means serve to justify tolerance to blatant violations of norms and principles of international law or misused for misinterpretation or selective application of international law. Practice over past two decades serves as a grim manifestation that so-called “balancing” approach towards the aggressor and the aggrieved serves only as encouragement for the former to consolidate the results of illegal use of force.

Therefore, if the OSCE is sincerely interested in resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, it should urgently shift the focus back to the implementation of tasks given to the negotiation format, in particular engage both sides in substantive result-oriented talks with clear timelines. In the meantime, all OSCE participating States should fulfill their responsibility for eliminating consequences of serious breach of peace by Armenia, which now tries to escape from substantive negotiations, misleads the international community, distorts the sequence of steps identified in the Budapest Summit Document of 1994, and aggravates the situation on the ground by systematically violating the ceasefire and through illegal activities.

Armenia is obliged under the international law to cease its unlawful use of force against the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, withdraw its troops from the occupied territories and respect our territorial integrity and inviolability of our frontiers.

Azerbaijan has engaged in path of political resolution of the conflict, which in itself is the biggest compromise on our side. This, however, does not prejudice our rights under international law. As a country, which faces immense socio-economic burden and humanitarian plight of more than one million refugees and IDPs, Azerbaijan is the most interested party in finding an earliest resolution of the conflict, which will bring an end to occupation of its territories and restore the rights of its citizens.

It would be in line with the core objective of OSCE to find sustainable solutions for existing conflicts through equal and unreserved application of the Helsinki Final Act principles to all conflict situations with a view to bringing about an end to their violations. We thank all delegations which expressed support to territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and thus, demonstrated their adherence to rules-based international order.

In conclusion, we once again thank distinguished panelists for their valuable insights and wish them every success in fulfilling their very important work.

Thank you, Mme. Moderator.