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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1286th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
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*Aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan and situation
in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan*

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Azerbaijan would like to update the Permanent Council on the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan and its consequences as well as situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in the reporting period since the last meeting of the Permanent Council on 15-16 October.

Despite the humanitarian ceasefire agreed during the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow on 9 October 2020, to allow the return of remains and exchange of prisoners of war, effective as of 10 October 2020, the armed forces of Armenia continued to deliberately attack the densely populated areas in Azerbaijan, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law. These attacks are carried out from both the territory of Armenia and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

On 17 October 2020, the Aghdam, Aghjabadi, Barda, Goranboy and Tartar districts and the cities of Ganja and Mingachevir in Azerbaijan were subjected to intensive missile and artillery fire, causing civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian and public property.

In the night hours on 17 October, at around 1:00am, Ganja, the second largest city in Azerbaijan, once again came under the massive strike with “SCUD/Elbrus” ballistic missiles from the territory of Armenia. The missiles hitting two residential areas in the city killed 15 civilians, including 5 children and 4 women. More than 50 civilians, including 5 children and 20 women, were seriously wounded. The nearby civilian infrastructure and many residential areas in the city were either destroyed or seriously damaged, including the secondary school and the Samukh (Azerbaijan) – Gardabani (Georgia) electricity line. The same day, Aghdam, Aghjabadi, Barda, Goranboy, Mingachevir and Tartar cities of Azerbaijan were under constant shelling of armed forces of Armenia with rockets and heavy artillery.

We thank the Secretary General of the United Nations, the European Union and other International Organisations and individual States for deploring this heinous terrorist attack against innocent civilians.

This third bombardment of Ganja was preceded by attacks on the city with “Smerch” MLRS on 4 October and “SCUD/Elbrus” ballistic missiles on 11 October 2020. Armenia’s strikes against Ganja and other cities, towns and villages of Azerbaijan are aimed at murdering of civilians and causing indiscriminate or disproportionate harm to civilian objects. Statements by officials of Armenia and agents of the unlawful puppet regime it has set up in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan are illustrative in that regard.

Thus, in his interview to the "Vesti" news program at the “Russia” TV channel on 6 October 2020, Vagharshak Harutyunyan, Senior Advisor of the Prime Minister of Armenia, stated the following: “Now we have developed a tactic of striking artillery. And in the future we will strike at peaceful settlements in order to cause panic.”

Two days earlier, Arayik Harutyunyan, fake “president” of the unlawful puppet regime set up by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, said: “Many of you still remember both this photo & my statement. Reaffirming, we were not joking. Today I commanded to neutralize #Ganja military objects.”

On 5 October 2020, Vagram Pogosian, so-called spokesperson for the puppet regime stated: “A few more days and I'm afraid that even archaeologists will not be able to find the place of Ganja. Get sober, before it is too late.”

The Delegation of Azerbaijan will distribute the updated factsheet to all participating States on the warmongering statements by the Armenian officials threatening to target Azerbaijan’s civilian infrastructure, which demonstrate that these were not mere threats. Targeting civilian objects is part of Armenia’s military doctrine.

Against the background of the irrefutable evidence attesting to bombardment of the city of Ganja, statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, describing this barbaric act as “disinformation” and referring to it as “so-called ‘Armenian strikes on Ganja’” is illustrative of Armenia’s persistent denial of its responsibility for the atrocious crimes committed against Azerbaijani civilians during the conflict.

As it was reiterated by the President of Azerbaijan in address to the Nation following the recent missile strike against Ganja city, “Armenian leadership is committing a war crime. Shooting at civilians, including firing missiles, is a war crime, and they must and will bear responsibility for this crime.” He reaffirmed that unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan has never fought and will never wage a war against the civilian population. But, Azerbaijan is and will continue retaliating on the battlefield.

Azerbaijan showing once again its goodwill based on the principles of humanism agreed to a humanitarian ceasefire from as of 18 October, 00h00 local time. However, the armed forces of Armenia immediately after the declared ceasefire, starting from 00.02 local time fired at the Jabrayil city, as well as the villages of Jabrayil region liberated from the occupation, located along the Araz River using mortars and artillery. From 00.05 until 03.25 am the armed forces of Armenia violating the ceasefire

shelled the positions of Azerbaijan using the large-caliber weapons at the border of two States in the direction of Gadabay and Tovuz regions of Azerbaijan.

The armed forces of Armenia attempted to attack in the directions of Aghdara, Fuzuli, Hadrut and Jabrayil at 07.00 am on 18 October.

On 18 October, the Armenian armed forces stationed in Chambarak and Berd districts of Armenia using large-caliber weapons fired at the positions of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan in Gadabay, Goygol and Tovuz districts of Azerbaijan. In violation of the ceasefire Armenia's armed forces fired at the vicinity of the Jabrayil city, as well as the villages of this district liberated from the occupation and located along the Araz River. Aghdam, Aghdara, Fuzuli districts and city of Hadrut came under mortars and artillery fire.

Around 13:00pm of 18 October, armed forces of Armenia launched missile to Khyzy city of Azerbaijan, which is located 300 km away from the combat zone, aiming to hit Baku – Novorossiysk oil pipeline. The ballistic missile was destroyed before reaching target by the Air Defense Forces of Azerbaijan and some of the explosive particles inside the rocket were scattered over a distance of 250 meters from the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline passing through Sitalchay village in Khyzycity. Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action's (ANAMA) special mobile operation team found the remnants of the S-300 missile.

On 18 and 19 October 2020, residential areas of Aghdam, Aghjabadi (Yukhari Qiyamaddinli, Qarakhanli and Poladli villages), Goranboy and Tartar (Alasgarli village) districts of Azerbaijan were under constant mortar, rocket and artillery shelling by the armed forces of Armenia. On 19 October 2020, as a result of deliberate attack of the Armenian armed forces in Banovshalar settlement of the Aghdam district of Azerbaijan, a reporter of the Azerbaijan Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (AZTV) seconded to the frontline zone was seriously injured. After shelling of Tartar city of Azerbaijan by the Armenian armed forces the secondary school No. 1 and cotton processing plant were seriously damaged.

Starting from the morning of 20 October 2020, the Armenian armed forces shelled the Tartar district of Azerbaijan from various directions with rockets and heavy artillery.

On 22 October 2020, ballistic missiles were launched from Armenia's Gafan and Jermuk regions in the direction of Gabala, Siyazan and Kurdamir regions of Azerbaijan, located more than 150 km away from the border. All 6 missiles were intercepted by Azerbaijan's Air Defence System.

These attacks and attempts to occupy again the territories of Azerbaijan continue to date. In order to repulse the aggression and ensure the safety of the civilian population, the armed forces of Azerbaijan continue the counter-offensive operation, neutralizing Armenian fire and stronghold battle positions and liberating the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan from enemy occupation, in the exercise of right of self-defence and in full compliance with international humanitarian law, exclusively on Azerbaijan's sovereign soil. As of today, Armed Forces of Azerbaijan liberated around 100 towns and villages in Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Khojavand and Tartar districts of Azerbaijan, thus implementing the UN Security Council resolutions 874 and 884 demanding to withdraw the Armenian occupying forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Since the outbreak of hostilities on 27 September 2020, direct and indiscriminate attacks of the armed forces of Armenia against the cities, towns and villages in Azerbaijan, as of 21 October 2020, 63 civilians, including children, women and elderly, were killed, 292 civilians were wounded, 1981 private houses, 90 residential buildings and 386 other civilian facilities were either destroyed or damaged.

Officially, reported casualties from the Armenian side prove that Armed Forces of Azerbaijan distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and make every possible effort to prevent harm to the civilian population, acting in accordance with international humanitarian law. Azerbaijan faithfully implements its commitments under the 10 October agreement and communicated to the ICRC its readiness to transfer unilaterally to Armenia remains of the Armenian servicemen via a pre-agreed corridor with the mediation of the ICRC. Azerbaijan provides adequate medical care and conditions for the Armenian prisoners of war Areg Sargsyan, Narek Amirjanyan and Albert Mikaelyan, who were captured during the combat operations in the occupied territories. These Armenian servicemen were provided opportunity to contact their families in Armenia by phone and informed them about the treatment they are undergoing.

On the contrary, continuation of bombardment of the towns and villages of Azerbaijan far away from the frontline that moved deep into the occupied territories indicates that Armenia targets civilian objects deliberately to cause maximum indiscriminate or disproportionate harm to civilians and damage the civilian objects. Moreover, the Notes Verbale of the Delegation of Armenia to the OSCE demonstrate that the Armenian side inflates the number of displaced population from the occupied territories with a view to using exaggerated figures for political ends. According to the figures presented by the UNHCR during the informal consultation in the UN Security Council last week, the number of displaced persons varies from 10-20,000, much lower than the Armenian statistics.

We have reported previously to the Permanent Council that the Armenian side introduced restrictions on free movement in the occupied territories and prohibited male population of conscript age to leave this territory. Furthermore, the Ministry of Defense of Armenia admitted through a promo video released this week that it recruits so-called “volunteers” abroad and sends them to the conflict zone to fight on the Armenian side. A women squad composed of 100 Armenian women was formed to join the combat operations. Against this background, it is obvious that hysteria unleashed by Armenia about alleged participation of so-called mercenaries on the side of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan is nothing but a smokescreen to cover up recruitment by Armenia of foreign fighters, which is corroborated by the official Armenian sources. Our Delegation has distributed to all participating States the factsheet on fake news and disinformation of Armenia under the reference number SEC.DEL/529/20.

The gross violation of the humanitarian ceasefire by Armenia, already for the second time after its formal declaration as well as recruitment of mercenaries and FTFs under the disguise of so-called “volunteers” demonstrates the continuation of the aggressive policy of Armenia against Azerbaijan and its reluctance to the negotiated settlement of the conflict. It is also an open disrespect by Armenia to the efforts of the mediators, who have been engaged in finding an accord of the sides to the humanitarian ceasefire.

Azerbaijan calls on the participating States and the international community as a whole to strongly condemn the barbaric and atrocity methods of warfare employed by Armenia, which amount to war crimes and demand justice and accountability.

Yesterday Armenia's Prime Minister stated during a live broadcast that "We have to clearly realize that, at least at this stage and for a long time to come, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict does not have a diplomatic solution, and we must give up all those hopes or proposals aimed at finding a diplomatic solution, especially in the current situation". This demonstrates that Armenia's leadership is not willing to seize the opportunity to engage constructively in the negotiations to resolve the conflict. On the contrary, Armenia's Prime Minister presented six steps, which in his view are required to achieve victory. To demonstrate how detached the Armenian leadership is from the reality, it is worthwhile to quote these steps as quoted by the News.am Armenian media outlet: "Step 1. Form a voluntary detachment (minimum of 30 volunteers). Step 2. Select a commander. Step 3. Address the military registration office of the place of residence of the commander. Step 4. Harmonize and undergo training at a military unit. Step 5. Go to the border to defend the homeland. Step 6. Achieve victory." This requires no additional comments.

This irresponsible position of Armenia is recent episode in the chain of warmongering statements of the Armenian leadership, which led to the current situation. This sense of impunity and permissiveness must be urgently addressed by the international community, in particular the OSCE and its Co-chairing countries, since it leaves no room for any meaningful negotiation with the current Armenian Government. Armenia must be brought back to the logic and understandings underlying the OSCE Minsk Group-led negotiation process before it is too late.

Armenia must demonstrate in words and deeds that it is genuinely interested in peace in the region; it must cease its policy of annexation and ethnic cleansing; it must comply with its international obligations and withdraw its forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, which will pave the way for the achievement of lasting peace, security and stability in the region.

The responsibility for the consequences of counter-offensive measures, which Azerbaijan is obliged to take in connection with the continued illegal presence of the Armenian armed forces in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in order to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders lies entirely with the Republic of Armenia.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.