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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1287th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
29 October 2020**

*In response to the Delegation of the United States
on behalf of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries*

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to thank the Delegation of United States for delivering statement on behalf of the Co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group. Our Delegation has already responded to similar statements of the co-chairs and leaders of their countries at the last meeting of Permanent Council, so I will refrain myself from repeating our position, focusing instead on some of the key aspects.

Azerbaijan has consistently stated that it is the most interested party in finding a soonest, durable peaceful solution to the conflict. However, over the past years, repeated calls by Azerbaijan to address the stalemate in the conflict resolution accompanied by continued unlawful activities by Armenia aimed at altering the demographic, cultural and physical character in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan with a view to consolidating the occupation and imposing a *fait accompli*, were ignored. The situation was further exacerbated by the lack of adequate reaction by the OSCE and its Minsk Group Co-Chairs to irresponsible, warmongering statements and aggressive actions by Armenia, denouncing its adherence to the logic and understandings underlying the OSCE Minsk Group-led negotiation process and rejecting the step-by-step approach in the conflict settlement. This contributed to Armenia's sense of impunity and permissiveness that led to the current situation that we are facing.

We have heard today renewed call to cease hostilities and to resume substantive negotiations to resolve the conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. But, we also see hastily organized arms supplies to Armenia from the CIS and Middle Eastern countries, which demonstrate that Armenia is abusing the ceasefire to resupply, regroup its remaining troops and launch new offensive operations. We heard today from the Armenian Ambassador denouncing the basis for negotiations, claiming that territorial integrity of Azerbaijan will not be recognized and calling for recognition of unlawful puppet entity Armenia has set up in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. This is the real face of party to the conflict with whom Azerbaijan has to negotiate. Furthermore, those participating States who in their interventions called for negotiations, have not touched upon Armenia's irresponsible behavior and its Prime Minister's inconsistent position. To whom these calls are addressed and why the main issues are missing in these calls by those delegations? There is a problem in the negotiation process and we need to look into the process. We monitor the situation and we know exactly from which country the supplies of deadly rockets that target our cities and civilians are organized and in what quantities and we will disclose this information in due course. The amount of weapons and ammunition destroyed and captured by the armed forces of Azerbaijan in the course of our counter-offensive operation during the last month is three times higher than what the Armenian side has officially submitted under relevant politico-military instruments, and none of those who spoke condemned or mentioned this reality, which demonstrates that Armenia had no intention to withdraw peacefully its forces from these territories.

Azerbaijan has a solid track-record of pushing for result-oriented substantive negotiations to achieve progress in political resolution of the conflict. To this end, we called for active involvement of the OSCE Minsk Group and none of the members of this group, except Turkey, reciprocated these calls. I am asking the Members of the Minsk Group why you avoid your responsibilities and how, in these circumstances, Azerbaijan is expected to implement its obligations which my country accepted? We call on those states who spoke about the commitments to ceasefire also to implement their own commitments on the basis of peace process as responsible members of the OSCE Minsk Group. We encourage you to restore the ownership of the OSCE over the conflict resolution process, because there are clear problems in this regard.

To remind once again, the Budapest Summit decision of 1994 strongly endorsed the mediation efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group as a whole and expressed appreciation for the efforts by individual members of the Minsk Group. It established the institution of co-chairmanship of the Minsk Conference to ensure a common and agreed basis for negotiations and to realize full coordination in all mediation and negotiation activities. Thus, the role and mandate of the co-chairs is identified within its precise limits. This mandate never meant to sideline the Minsk Group or to monopolize the process. Unfortunately, this is what is happening and it is happening with a deafening silence of the Minsk Group members.

Instead of focusing on the tasks given by the OSCE decisions and UN Security Council resolutions, the co-chairmen over last years concentrated their activities on establishing so-called environment conducive to negotiations, which in itself is a precondition for negotiations and was interpreted by Armenia as such. The never ending process of informal meetings that did not bring any tangible results over the past years only played into the hands of Armenia, which pursued the obvious goal of undermining the efforts towards the political resolution of the conflict and consolidating the *status-quo* of occupation.

It is clear that there can be no business as usual. Assumptions, which were guiding the activities of the Co-chairs for years did not work. There is urgent need to bring the conflict resolution process back on track. The UN Security Council resolutions, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the decisions and documents of OSCE provide political and legal framework for the resolution of the conflict, define the mandate of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group and identify tasks to be implemented and sequence to be followed.

Despite this clear framework and steps identified within the Minsk process, Co-chairs did not exercise pressure on Armenia to comply with UN Security Council resolutions and OSCE decisions, which envisage restoration of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders, which has never been and will never be a subject of negotiations or any compromise. Mediation activities on the resolution of the conflict must be directed to this end.

Instead of compelling Armenia to comply with its obligations under international law and UN Security Council resolutions, we see attempts by the Co-chairing countries to downplay the key decisions of the UN Security Council and OSCE that provide foundation for their activities. In most recent episode, the co-chairing countries refused to include reference to the UN Security Council resolutions in the draft statement, which was proposed by them to be adopted after the informal discussions of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in the UN Security Council on 19 October. In spite of clear overwhelming support by members of the Security Council in favor of including reference to UNSC resolutions, co-chairing countries preferred not to have UNSC Presidential Statement calling for a ceasefire rather than having one, which would refer to the UNSC resolutions. We consider this as attempted departure from key commitments and obligations contained in those UN

Security Council resolutions and OSCE decisions. Deviation from this established framework of negotiations undermines the Co-chairs' impartiality and contributes to deepening mistrust, thus making the prospect of the soonest resolution of the conflict elusive.

The Republic of Azerbaijan has demonstrated that the military occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan does not represent a solution and will never produce a political outcome desired by Armenia. Azerbaijan will never reconcile with so-called reality created through unlawful use of force. Azerbaijan will restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity, either through peaceful or politico-military means. In doing so, Azerbaijan implements the UN Security Council resolutions, which were supposed to be implemented by the OSCE as a regional arrangement under chapter VIII of the UN Charter. We have changed the status-quo and created new reality on the ground that everybody will have to reckon with. Azerbaijan liberated from the Armenian occupation most of its occupied territories.

There is still a chance to resolve the conflict by political means and to save lives. Armenia must start to implement the demands of UN Security Council resolutions and withdraw its armed forces from the remaining occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Armenian Prime Minister has to denounce the use of force and to recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its international recognized boundaries. Implementation of these steps will be conducive for bringing about peace to the region. Our expectation from the meeting of Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan with the Co-Chairs tomorrow in Geneva is swift elaboration of concrete timetable of withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.