



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1505th (Special) Meeting of the Permanent Council
23 January 2025

*in response to the address by H.E. Ms. Elina Valtonen, Chairperson-In-Office and
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland*

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, we would like to extend our heartfelt condolences to the delegation of brotherly Türkiye in connection with the tragedy in Bolu province causing loss of life. We wish speedy recovery to all those injured.

The Delegation of Azerbaijan welcomes Her Excellency Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen back to the Permanent Council.

Finland has assumed the Chairmanship of our Organization amidst the continued deterioration of the overall security in the OSCE region. Various threats and challenges continue to keep the security environment in the OSCE region under strain and undermine comprehensive and co-operative security. The situation is further exacerbated by continued crisis of multilateralism, erosion of trust and confidence as well as rising ethnic and religious intolerance and discrimination, which demands redoubled efforts to resume meaningful dialogue and seek sustainable solutions.

For decades Azerbaijan has been among the most vocal advocates of adherence to the principles enshrined in the core OSCE documents, starting from the Helsinki Final Act, in particular respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders of States. Both their gross violations and inconsistent and selective application have undermined the vision of collective security formulated in the Helsinki Final Act. These principles remain the bedrock of security and peace, as well as the basis for cooperation within the OSCE.

Transnational threats continue to challenge security and stability in the OSCE area. We view positively the Chairmanship's initiative to convene a conference on cybersecurity. Furthermore, we recall the OSCE's commendable record in addressing other forms of transnational organized crime, including terrorism and drug trafficking. We believe that building resilience implies continuation of cooperation that once thrived in these areas.

We welcome that the Finnish Chairmanship has identified climate change as a central area of its focus within the second dimension. We are ready to share our expertise and experience in cooperation on climate-related issues, including as COP29 Presidency.

In the human dimension, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms must be accorded on an equal and non-discriminatory basis. A balanced and holistic approach between the three dimensions is a necessary prerequisite for building common security space in the OSCE.

While noting the intention of the Chairmanship to focus on gender equality and youth issues, we believe that the pressing topics such as fostering tolerance, combating discrimination, and upholding respect for individuals irrespective of their religion, belief, or race should also remain high on the

OSCE human dimension agenda for 2025. In particular, we stress the importance of strengthening the OSCE's efforts to counter racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism.

As my country continues to recover from the consequences of the nearly three-decade long military occupation, which has left profound scars and widespread devastation of our territories, we would like to highlight the acute mine problem that continues to claim lives of civilians. Over 3,400 Azerbaijani citizens, including children and women, have fallen victim to landmines, which underscores the urgent need for supporting Azerbaijan's efforts in mine clearance and victim assistance. We also look forward to hearing more about specific plans to engage with the persons with disabilities.

We took note that the Chairmanship in its program had emphasized "support [for] peaceful relations in the South Caucasus". In this respect, we underline that with elimination of illegal military deployment and restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, peace has essentially been established in the region. This has created substantially new conditions to pave the way for inter-state normalization between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Significant progress was registered with respect to the text of the draft bilateral agreement while Azerbaijan and Armenia completed delimitation and demarcation of some portion of their borders through direct bilateral dialogue. The Regulation regarding the joint activities of the respective border commissions, signed and entered into force last year, will guide efforts to carry out the next phases of the delimitation work. These achievements vividly demonstrate that direct bilateral negotiations are the best and the only viable way for moving forward in the normalization process, which has been consistently advocated for by Azerbaijan.

Notwithstanding the progress, there are persistent challenges on the path of normalization. The obsolete and irrelevant OSCE structures related to the former Minsk process must be dissolved and the related programs must be removed from the Unified Budget. We believe that the Organization's scarce resources must be allocated where they are needed the most, to fund the programmatic activities that are relevant and enjoy consensus among participating States.

Furthermore, normalization process depends on implementing in action Armenia's declared commitment to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, including by removing territorial claims still embedded in its constitution and other legislative acts, and abandoning militarization policy, which will only raise tensions in the region.

At this critical juncture when there is a historic opportunity for Azerbaijan and Armenia to turn the page of confrontation and establish good-neighborly relations, the wider international community including the OSCE participating states, also bears responsibility not to harm the ongoing process by refraining from provocative actions and fueling tension.

In conclusion, we wish you and your team in Vienna and in Helsinki a successful and productive Chairmanship in 2025.

Thank you.