



**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

0052/10/10

Vienna, 10 February 2017

H.E. Mr. Clemens Koja,  
Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council

Dear Colleague,

In response to the continued allegations that the demining-related activities of the OSCE Office in Yerevan are not related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and are in line with the mandate of the Office, I would like to share with you information from the public sources, primarily from Armenian ones, on the subject matter as well as information received from the Office in Yerevan on 8 December 2016. This information provides sufficient and convincing evidence attesting that i) the demining-related activity of the Office is directly related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and ii) the geographic scope of the activities of the recipients of assistance from the Office extends to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Against this background, the findings of Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus, Günther Bächler, which were never presented in detail to the Republic of Azerbaijan, are doubtful and cannot serve as a basis for making any definite conclusions.

The Republic of Azerbaijan has been committed to engage constructively with a view to finding a solution to the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. Azerbaijan accepted as a compromise that a Chairmanship directive issued with proper OSCE reference number and distributed to all participating States could be a way out of current impasse. However, for whatever reasons, the Austrian Chairmanship opted to assert that the demining-related activity is within the scope of the mandate of the Office, issued guidance to the Office in Yerevan without consulting Azerbaijan on its content and put the blame for the current impasse on Azerbaijan.

Leaving aside the issue of trust, such a position of the Chairmanship created ambiguity with regard to the scope of the mandate of the Office. Azerbaijan reiterates that the mandate cannot include activities related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and cannot extend to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The Republic of Azerbaijan cannot accept such misinterpretation of the mandate of a field mission, which potentially can infringe upon the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group and the legitimate interests of Azerbaijan.


Cc: Permanent Missions and Delegations of the OSCE participating States,  
OSCE Partners for Cooperation,  
OSCE Secretariat and OSCE Institutions

Under these circumstances the only remaining option to rectify the situation is to insert into a Permanent Council decision on the extension of the Mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan a provision stipulating that the Office is not entitled to be involved in any activity related to the conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference and its settlement process.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Enclosure: As stated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Galib Israfilov', written in a cursive style.

Galib Israfilov

## FACT SHEET

- The OSCE Office in Yerevan maintains that “[t]he OSCE Office in Yerevan (Office) engages in activities that support building the capacity of the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE).” The Office informs that “[t]he procedures within the mandate of the CHDE are designed to ensure that the CHDE is responsible for planning, organization, coordination and control of the humanitarian demining activities to ensure that these are to be done safely, effectively and efficiently.”
- The Office in Yerevan further notes that “[t]he baseline for the Office’s activities are the findings of the Non-Technical Survey (NTS) conducted by Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) in 2012-13 and the earlier Landmine Impact Survey in the Republic of Armenia conducted by UNDP in 2005.” NTS specifically notes that “[l]andmine and / or UXO contamination occurs only in the regions where Armenia borders Azerbaijan”, “...particularly in the areas where military actions were conducted or in the areas which are located in close proximity to battle fields.”
- The OSCE Office in Yerevan provided the following quote from the NTS report “[t]he results of the FSD NTS in the Republic of Armenia clearly indicate that the country still suffers many adverse consequences from landmine and UXO contamination, even though the last military activities were conducted and last landmines and UXOs were emplaced 19 years ago (1994).”
- According to *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor* report, to which the OSCE Office in Yerevan refers in its answers provided to the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “[c]learance assets deployed in Armenia in 2015 consisted of HALO Trust clearance teams and HALO-led teams from the Armenian Peacekeeping Engineering Brigade (PKEB).” This report also identified that “[m]ine and ERW [explosive remnants of war] contamination in Armenia is primarily the consequence of armed conflict with Azerbaijan in 1988–1994”. “The heaviest contamination is along the borders and confrontation lines with Azerbaijan”.
- According to HALO Trust, it began mine clearance in the territory of Armenia on 1 April 2014, clearing a minefield in the village of Srashen, near the town of Kapan in Syunik region (bordering the occupied territories of Azerbaijan). Halo Trust informed that “[t]he people of Srashen and many other villages around Kapan have lived with the mines for over 20 years since the end of fighting over the neighbouring region of Nagorno Karabakh.” The same report by Halo Trust reads that “HALO’s work in Armenia is coordinated by and conducted under the authority of the Armenian Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Excellence.”<sup>1</sup>
- In March 2013, answering the question of Mediamax, whether CHDE’s authority extends only to the territory of Armenia or to so-called “NKR” as well, Ruben Arakelyan, Director of CHDE is quoted to have said that “[o]ur works are carried out on the administrative territory of the Republic of Armenia. The donors will certainly not encourage us if we work on the liberated [occupied] territories. But in any case it will be wrong to state that it’s out of our interests. The children living in a border village must know where the dangerous territories or mine fields are. In these cases we are trying to find a solution to eliminate the danger on the territories, which are in immediate vicinity of villages, by demining them or at least by shielding them.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “HALO begins clearance in Armenia”, the HALO Trust, 8 April 2014, <<https://www.halotrust.org/media-centre/news/halo-begins-clearance-in-armenia/>>.

<sup>2</sup> “Ruben Arakelyan. Armenia needs about 100mln USD to demine its territory”, Mediamax, 12 March 2013, <<http://www.mediamax.am/en/news/interviews/7046/>>.

- According to the information of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, in October 2015, Yuri Shahramanyan, program manager of HALO Trust Armenia, an implementing partner of CHDE, and the head of CHDE operation department Ara Martirosian held a briefing in Srashen village in Syunik region of Armenia, during which they “presented the attendants with the demined areas and their inspection methods, as well as unexploded munitions found and neutralized mines.”<sup>3</sup> In November 2015, Yuri Shahramanyan, who is at the same time program manager for “HALO Trust Artsakh”<sup>4</sup> together with head of the “Landmine Free Artsakh Campaign” initiative Ojeni Panossian visited the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and met there with agent of the subordinate separatist regime Bako Sahakyan. During the meeting, they discussed “issues related to demining process in Nagorno-Karabakh”<sup>5</sup>.
- In another report, speaking about demining operation in the occupied Nagorno-Karabkh region of Azerbaijan, Yuri Shahramanyan is quoted to have said that “[h]aving successfully deployed female de-miners in many countries, we felt that the time was right to try this in Nagorno-Karabagh.” He said that “[f]uture progress is very much dependent on funding”. “The more resources are available, the sooner all remaining minefields and cluster munitions sites will be cleared”.<sup>6</sup>
- After the April 2016 armed provocation by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia, the HALO Trust reported that it begun “emergency clearance in Karabakh”. In the same report, Yuri Shahramanyan is quoted to have said that “[i]t is fortunate that HALO has a well-trained local capacity that has been able to respond immediately. This emergency clearance is vital and we are pleased to be able to support the local services, while continuing with our work to clear all known landmines in Karabakh by 2020.”<sup>7</sup>
- According to another *Landmine and Cluster Monition Monitor* report, since 2000, HALO Trust conducted demining activities in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Thus, according to this report, as of 2015, HALO Trust deployed around 120 staff, and its overall operational capacity for mine and cluster munition operations comprised 11 manual clearance teams, two mechanical teams, and two explosive ordnance disposal (EOD)/survey teams.<sup>8</sup> The HALO Trust confirms on its web-page that it conducts mine clearance not only in Nagorno-Karabakh region, but also in other adjacent occupied territories.<sup>9</sup>
- Armen R. Harutyunyan confirmed that he had been HALO Trust operations manager overseeing mineclearance operations in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan in 2002-2005.<sup>10</sup> Since July 2013, A.Harutyunyan has been advising the CHDE Director and the CHDE Team on mine action issues.<sup>11</sup> This movement of demining experts between HALO Trust teams deployed in the occupied territories

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Defense of Armenia, Press release, “Demining activities continue”, 24 October 2015, <<http://www.mil.am/en/news/3754>>.

<sup>4</sup> “NK President Sahakyan discusses landmine clearance with LFA Founder”, 4 November 2015, <<http://www.landminefreeartsakh.com/news/>>

<sup>5</sup> “President Sahakyan discusses mine clearance in Karabakh”, PanARMENIAN.Net, 2 November 2015, <<http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/199887/>>.

<sup>6</sup> “HALO’s First All-Female Team of De-Miners Deployed in Artsakh”, Armenia Weekly, 18 September 2015, <<http://armenianweekly.com/2015/09/18/female-deminers/>>.

<sup>7</sup> “HALO begins emergency clearance in Karabakh”, the HALO Trust, 19 April 2016, <<https://www.halotrust.org/minefreeenk/media-centre/news/halo-begins-emergency-clearance-in-karabakh/>>.

<sup>8</sup> Landmine and Cluster Monition Monitor, 25 November 2016, <<http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2016/nagorno-karabakh/mine-action.aspx#ftnref14>>.

<sup>9</sup> HALO Trust, <<https://www.halotrust.org/minefreeenk/our-role-in-nagorno-karabakh/>>.

<sup>10</sup> *LinkedIn*, <<https://bg.linkedin.com/in/armen-r-harutyunyan-3997ab12>>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

and CHDE is a striking evidence of close integration and coordination of their activities and indicates that they both make use of capabilities developed with assistance of OSCE Office in Yerevan.

- Demining activities carried out in the occupied territories serve the annexation policy of Armenia with regard to these territories. The Republic of Azerbaijan has repeatedly brought to the attention of the international community, including through the *Report on illegal economic and other activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan* (2016) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan that demining activities in the occupied territories, including in the areas depopulated of their Azerbaijani inhabitants, in particular in the occupied Lachin district pursue the goal of making this land available for unlawful transfer of Armenian settlers into these territories and exploitation by them of the agricultural assets there. Thus, Armenian daily *Massispost.com* in its report of November 2015 informed that the villages cleared from mines by HALO Trust, "... have experienced not just returning families but new settlers as well especially Syrian Armenians in the Kashatagh (Lachin) region."
- The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen confirmed in their report after 2010 field assessment mission to the occupied territories that 14,000 Armenians were resettled in the occupied territories, including in Lachin and Kalbajar districts. The Co-chairmen again urged "[...] to avoid any activities in the territories [...] that would prejudice a final settlement or change the character of these areas."