



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1128th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
19 January 2017**

situation around the extension of the mandate by the OSCE Office in Yerevan

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to update the Council on position of Azerbaijan on the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. As we have observed attempts of the Armenian officials to publicly put the blame for non-extension of the mandate on Azerbaijan, I wish to briefly underline the steps that the Delegation of Azerbaijan have undertaken so far in the OSCE to flag our concerns over demining-related activities of the Office.

The first time the Office proposed the demining activities was in the OSCE 2014 Program Outline document. The Delegation of Azerbaijan had requested comprehensive information on the project within the budget consideration process. We specifically inquired about the need for such a project in Armenia, which has not been a theater of military actions during the Armenia-Azerbaijan war. We clearly indicated that if the planned activity was related to the conflict, it should have been dropped from the Unified Budget of 2014 due to the understanding that Office is not authorized to deal with conflict-related matters. At that time we got the general response from CPC that mostly did not address our concerns. The only concrete oral answer given to us was that the project will be limited to the territory of Armenia.

Then we attempted to arrange discussions on demining project of the Office in Yerevan within the Forum for Security Cooperation. Regretfully, Armenia, as a host country, prevented every attempt to bring more clarity and transparency to the activities of the OSCE Office in Yerevan in this area.

In 2015 we consistently raised our concerns during the discussions of the OSCE Program Outline for 2016 and annual report of Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan to the Permanent Council. Since we have been assured that the Office was not engaged in demining activity related to the conflict, our Delegation expressed concerns that the demining project by the Office can strengthen capacity and skills of relevant Armenian structures, which can be easily used against Azerbaijan in the occupied territories. We again requested discontinuing of the demining-related activity and dropping it from the Unified Budget of 2016. The OSCE Chairmanship, which guided consultations in the ACMF in 2015, requested the compromise from us and in return promised to us that they will thoroughly investigate the matter in 2016 and will utilize control mechanism over this particular activity of the Office. We accepted the compromise offer by the Chairmanship and made an interpretative statement during the adoption of Unified Budget of 2016 with request to ensure effective control over the Office activity.

In 2016 we continued to raise the matter in our consultations with the Chairmanship, especially when the-then Head of Office Mr. Sorokin publicly accused the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of

Europe of disregarding the fundamental principles of the OSCE and criticized the role of Turkey in the OSCE Minsk Group. I brought up such inadmissible violations of the mandate by Mr. Sorokin in my letters addressed to the Chairmanship and to the Director of CPC. I questioned the impartiality of the Head of the OSCE Mission in Yerevan and requested an urgent political guidance to be given by the Chairmanship. In my letters I emphatically stressed that the reservations made by the Azerbaijani side in the interpretative statement attached to the decision on the extension of the OSCE Office in Yerevan became increasingly valid and could prompt a further course of action leading to the review of the mandate of the OSCE office in Yerevan and its budgetary allocations. I urged the Chairmanship and CPC Director to take immediate measures to ensure that the activities of the OSCE Office in Yerevan are in full compliance with the mandate. In response the Chairmanship sent its Special Representative to Yerevan, but the problem still continued to persist. In the meantime, we still received alarming news from open sources, indicating violations of the mandate. We continued to flag our concerns to Mr. Avakov, the new Head of Office in Yerevan, both informally and during his annual report to the Permanent Council.

In spite of the concerns of Azerbaijan raised consistently over last three years, the demining-related activity was again included into the draft 2017 Unified Budget. We submitted a number of questions to the Office in Yerevan and requested comprehensive information on the project. The answers we received from the Office clearly indicated that its programmatic activity indeed envisages support to demining-related activities in areas that were mined by Armenia in early 1990s during its military operations against Azerbaijan. Furthermore, we received no convincing argument that this particular programmatic activity of the Office corresponds to its available expertise and comparative advantages.

Consequently, given the fact that the said activity is related to the ongoing Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and thus, is not in line with its mandate, Azerbaijan requested the OSCE Chairmanship and the CPC to make necessary adjustments to the planned activities of the Office for 2017 and remove the demining-related activity from its budget proposal for 2017.

Unfortunately, Armenia's position based on denial of legitimate rights of Azerbaijan as a participating State to adjust budgetary allocations to field mission led to crisis of Organization. Such a technical issue as revising the budget proposal of an OSCE fund was politicized. In the course of deliberations, conciliatory attitude and lack of proper reaction by the involved stakeholders was taken by Armenia as an encouragement for further blackmailing and open hostage-taking. Armenia blocked, without any arguments, adoption of decisions on extension of mandates of OSCE missions in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and OSCE border monitoring mission on the Russian-Ukrainian border, as well as the decision on revision of 2016 OSCE Unified Budget.

Such an unacceptable approach displayed by the Delegation of Armenia, which in fact rendered the OSCE field missions dysfunctional, should be rejected by the OSCE in unity and solidarity in the interest of the entire Organization. It is clear that without outside support or instigation Armenia on its own can hardly make the fate of critically important OSCE field missions contingent upon its whims.

Mr. Chairperson,

The position of Azerbaijan on the matter is of principled character and based on the mandate adopted by collective decisions of all OSCE participating States, as well as existing practice and procedures of the Organization. All structures, including field missions of the OSCE should act as common assets for all OSCE participating States and in all circumstances must refrain from any action that could harm legitimate interests of the participating States. Activities of OSCE field missions should be transparent and accountable to all 57 participating States, since they were established by collective will and are funded through the financial contributions of all participating States. Deviation by Armenia from such

fundamental tenets of the OSCE by claiming privileged treatment for the mission it hosts, especially its intention to misuse the OSCE Office in Yerevan against legitimate interests of Azerbaijan is contrary to foundations of the Organization, and Azerbaijan is not going to tolerate it anymore.

The Delegation of Azerbaijan remains committed to engage constructively with a view to finding a solution within the parameters outlined above.

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

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.