



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1385th Meeting (Special) of the Permanent Council,
9 August 2022**

*Recent military provocations by the armed forces of Armenia
and non-implementation by Armenia of its obligations
under the trilateral statements*

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset, we reject all allegations and worn-out speculations of the Armenian Delegation with regard to the situation on the ground. No amount of these allegations may alter the basic reality that it was Armenia who was the aggressor and who committed an act of aggression against Azerbaijan by occupying our territories for over 28 years. Despite the well-known UN Security Council resolutions demanding immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenia's forces from the territory of Azerbaijan, it was the result of 44-day Patriotic War in 2020 that put an end to nearly three decades of occupation. Trilateral statement signed on 10 November 2020, to which the Armenian Delegation referred, clearly indicates who is the aggressor and who is the aggrieved by envisaging the withdrawal of Armenia's armed forces from the territories of Azerbaijan. So, I would like to invite the Armenian Delegation to read again the trilateral statement. There is only one reality - that Azerbaijan after almost 30 years of occupation and despite the efforts by the OSCE Minsk Group, which proved futile and useless, was able to put an end to the conflict and restore its territorial integrity.

In that context, we would like to register our rejection of the references to so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh" in the title of the current issues raised by the Delegations of Armenia and the United States. There is no such administrative unit within the territory of Azerbaijan. According to the decree of 7 July 2021 by the President of Azerbaijan on the new division of economic regions in Azerbaijan, the new Karabakh and East Zangazur Economic regions were created. We urge the participating States to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, in compliance with the principles of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments.

We draw the attention of the Permanent Council that on 3 August 2022, the armed forces of Armenia and the Armenian armed formations illegally present on the territory of Azerbaijan, where the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is temporarily deployed, fired intensively on the positions of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan in the direction of the Lachin district of Azerbaijan. As a result, one military servicemen of Azerbaijan was killed. Illegal Armenian armed detachments also subjected to fire the positions of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan in the directions of the Aghdam, Khojavand and Khojaly districts of Azerbaijan. Moreover, they attempted to seize the Girkhgiz high ground, located on a mountain range covering the territory of the Kalbajar and Lachin districts, and establish new combat positions therein.

I assume this information would be useful for the Delegation of the European Union in finding answers to questions that it raised.

Armenia also committed military provocations along the state border in the direction of the Kalbajar and Lachin districts of Azerbaijan.

Just yesterday, on 8 August, the positions of our armed forces in the direction of Kalbajar, Goranboy and Fuzuli districts once again came under fire by illegal Armenian armed detachments in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed. Further provocations were committed by Armenia on the state border in the direction of the Kalbajar and Lachin districts of Azerbaijan.

It must be emphasized that Armenia has been regularly resorting to military provocations against the armed forces of Azerbaijan since the second half of June.

The units of Azerbaijan's armed forces took adequate retaliatory measures to respond to these military provocations by Armenia.

All responsibility for the incident and tensions that took place lies with the political-military leadership of Armenia.

Aforementioned provocations of the Armenian side represent a gross violation of the trilateral statements signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, as well as the statements of the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia after the meetings mediated by the President of the Council of the European Union Charles Michel.

The recent actions by Armenia took place against the backdrop of continuing illegal military activities by Armenia in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed. This includes illegal military build-up, rotation of its armed forces and illegal transfer of weapons and personnel to this territory, jamming air flights over the territory of Azerbaijan and resorting to military provocations. To conceal its illegal military presence in the territory of Azerbaijan, Armenia tries to portray its armed forces as self-defence forces of so-called fictitious "Nagorno-Karabakh".

Armenia keeps misusing the Lachin road for military purposes in contravention of the provisions of the trilateral statement, which provide for the use of this road only for citizens, vehicles and goods. Armenia continues to transport its military servicemen and weapons by this road.

It is obvious that the most recent provocation is yet another attempt by Armenia to escalate the situation on the ground aimed at delaying and preventing implementation by this country of its obligations under the trilateral statements.

As we reported earlier, Armenia refuses to fully withdraw its armed forces and illegal armed formations from the territory of Azerbaijan, where the peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, as envisaged by Article 4 of the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement.

The fact of the presence of Armenia's armed forces and illegal Armenian armed detachments in the territory of Azerbaijan was also recently acknowledged by the Armenian officials. Thus, on 29 June Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian armed forces Sahak Sahakyan stated that: "Armenian conscripts in the Karabakh region will be replaced by servicemen of active military service." The Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan in an interview on 19 July has said that "the withdrawal of the units of the Armed Forces of Armenia from Karabakh will be completed by September of this year." Needless to say that both statements contradict the obligations assumed by Armenia with the signing of the trilateral statement.

We bring further to the attention of the Permanent Council that in accordance with the Article 6 of the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020, the construction of a new road in the Lachin district has been going on for many months now. The Armenian side has been not only duly informed and fully aware about these developments, but actually agreed to the new crossing point at the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia where the new road from Azerbaijan would connect to the road on the territory of Armenia. The meetings between the Azerbaijani and Armenian side were held where these questions were discussed. Azerbaijan launched the construction of the new road and coordinated it with the temporarily deployed Russian peacekeeping contingent. Armenia requested time until 25 August for returning Lachin city and surrounding areas to Azerbaijani control and for relocating Armenian settlers, who were transferred illegally herein over the course of occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan.

As Armenia will inevitably relocate Armenian settlers from Lachin, we demand Armenia not to engage and prevent acts of vandalism by Armenians evacuating from the city of Lachin and surrounding areas, as was the case in Kalbajar and Lachin districts, when Armenian settlers were burning residential buildings and houses, schools and other civilian infrastructure. At that time they severed electricity cables and poles, destroyed gas stations and cut down trees before leaving the area, thus committing acts of ecological terror in an attempt to inflict maximum possible damage to Azerbaijan and returning Azerbaijani IDPs.

Now, as the time approaches, Armenia refuses to implement what has been agreed in line with the provisions of the trilateral statement and resorts to all sorts of provocations to further delay, on the one hand, the withdrawal of the illegal Armenian armed detachments from the territory of Azerbaijan, and on the other, to postpone the return to Azerbaijan's control of the city of Lachin and surrounding villages and withdrawal of illegal settlers from there. References to the developments around Lachin road in the statements of MFA of Armenia and remarks by the Prime Minister of this country are indicative of clear linkage between unwillingness of Armenia to implement its obligations under the trilateral statement and the recent provocation.

This is the overall context in the run-up to the military provocations which happened on 3 August. It was Armenia who was interested in the escalation. Thus, all calls to de-escalate must be addressed to this country.

Through these destructive steps Armenia grossly violates the provisions of the trilateral statements and its other international obligations, which undermine the post-conflict normalization process between the two countries, including agreements facilitated by the European Council President Mr. Charles Michel.

Armenia must abandon its "Line of Contact" mentality. Let us remind that the conflict was resolved and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan was restored, rendering the notion of so-called "LoC" obsolete. Peacekeepers were deployed at certain agreed points in the territory of Azerbaijan for a fixed-term period. At the post-conflict stage in our region there is no such notion as "LoC". We urge Armenia and other actors to abandon the logic of divides and "lines of contact", as it must be consigned to the past once and for all in order to open up a way for durable peace and stability in the region.

As to the calls to return to negotiations table or seeking negotiated solutions, which we heard from the Delegations of the EU, USA and some other States, we would like to stress that now that the conflict has been resolved Azerbaijan is ready to discuss the issues that fall within the scope of bilateral relations with Armenia that includes establishment of inter-State relations between the two States, delimitation and demarcation of the state border and opening up of regional communications. These are the issues on the agenda that we agreed with Armenia.

Azerbaijan's consistent and unequivocal position in the post-conflict period on normalization process with Armenia is expressed first and foremost in the five basic principles that Azerbaijan presented for the establishment of inter-State relations between the two countries. These principles are grounded in international law and reflect best international practice. They shall serve as the basis for negotiation of a bilateral inter-State treaty. On our side, we are ready to actively and effectively engage in further negotiations. Yet disruptive actions of Armenia are hardly conducive to the progress in this process.

As for delimitation of the state border, Azerbaijan considers it as an indispensable element of establishment of inter-State relations between former sides to the conflict. Let us remind that as a follow-up to the third Brussels meeting of the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia with the President of the European Council, the two national commissions for border delimitation were formed and conducted their first meeting on the state border on 24 May. While this gave an overall positive impetus to the process, it has been backpedalled by Armenia since then.

Another essential aspect of post-conflict normalization is unblocking of regional transport and communication routes between the two countries, including railways and highways, which is envisaged by the Article 9 of the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement and another trilateral statement of 11 January 2021. This will ensure unimpeded movement between the mainland Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic on the one hand, and international transport between the two countries and through their territories, on the other. On this track, too, Armenia refuses to implement the relevant provisions and delays the process of providing coordinates for the construction of a highway.

Thus, constant delays by the Armenian side in implementing the provisions of the trilateral statements using various lame excuses clearly demonstrate Armenia's non-constructive and disruptive attitude towards its obligations stipulated in these statements and other agreements. So, the calls to engage in negotiations must be addressed to Armenia, where revanchist attitude still prevails.

We also strongly urge the participating States to refrain from replication of obsolete concepts that may feed false expectations or illusions, and thus, risk to jeopardize high-level efforts for post-conflict normalization. Instead, we once again strongly encourage them to bring their positions in line with the current agenda of negotiations, if they want to remain relevant and helpful in the current context. Repeating obsolete narratives and perceptions by some Delegations is counterproductive. It will only sustain revanchist attitudes prevailing in Armenia and will be irrelevant for us.

The same goes for the references by the Armenian Delegation to the Minsk Group, which it called "the most balanced format." If the aggressor state calls the format balanced it raises certain questions. In any event, now that the conflict is resolved, we clearly expressed our position with regard to the Minsk Group. The fact that today we have four current issues raised by separate Delegations is a clear demonstration of dysfunctionality of this structure. So, references and support to this obsolete format is not helpful in contributing to peace building efforts in the region.

Since the end of the armed conflict Azerbaijan has been consistently and constructively promoting aforementioned areas as essential for turning over the page of conflict and animosity, and embarking, however difficult it might be, onto the process of post-conflict normalization of relations and peace-building based on the fundamental principles of international law and the OSCE principles and commitments. This is expressed clearly both in the statements and concrete steps of Azerbaijani side. The purpose is square and clear – attaining durable peace, security and stability in the region, and making it irreversible.

As one of the most recent examples, we would like to inform the Permanent Council that the first group of Azerbaijani IDPs was finally able to return to newly reconstructed Agali village of Azerbaijan's liberated Zangilan district after almost three decades of occupation.

Azerbaijan also on a number of occasions clearly expressed its resolve to re-integrate its citizens of Armenian origin to the political, economic, social and cultural space of Azerbaijan. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides the necessary legal framework in this regard.

However, as the events of the last week demonstrated, the challenges in the post-conflict normalization process persist due to non-implementation by the Armenian side of its obligations. Recent military provocations are illustrative of the fact that the presence of Armenian armed forces and illegal armed detachments in the territory of Azerbaijan and provocations committed by them remains the main source of threat to peace, stability and security in the region. In this regard, demilitarization of these territories, complete withdrawal of Armenian troops and disarmament of illegal Armenian armed detachments are absolutely necessary.

At the current critical juncture in our region, all efforts should be directed at consolidating peace in the region on the basis of post-conflict realities and well-known five principles proposed by Azerbaijan that offer a unique opportunity and real prospects for peace, security and stability in the region.

We stress that on its part Azerbaijan will continue undertaking post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and peace-building efforts and implementing commitments stemming from the trilateral statements. We will resolutely prevent any destructive steps against this process. We urge Armenia, if this country is genuinely interested in peace and stability in the region, to abandon its attempts aimed at undermining the process of post-conflict normalization and ensure that necessary further steps are taken in this direction. This has no alternative for long-term peace and stability in the region.

The statement of the Armenian delegation earlier today, which differs from what we are hearing at high-level, is indicative that this delegation still refuses to reconcile with reality and fails to draw lessons from the past. Armenia should soberly assess the new realities, and instead of repeating its worn-out accusations, allegations and wish-list, should reciprocate on the constructive offer of Azerbaijan and seize the historic window of opportunity to normalize its relations with Azerbaijan and other neighbouring countries and engage in post-conflict peace-building efforts based on the five principles proposed by Azerbaijan. This will open immense economic opportunities for the broader region, but first of all for this country.

It is also essential for the international community, including the OSCE, to send the right messages to Armenia and urge this country to focus on the implementation of its obligations instead of engaging in the acts of politico-military adventurism and opportunism, which proved costly for this country on so many occasions before.

In closing, we stress once again that the armed forces of Azerbaijan will continue taking appropriate resolute measures in order to repel any provocations by Armenia and ensure the protection of Azerbaijan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of its internationally recognized borders.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.