



**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
1406<sup>th</sup> (Special) Meeting of the Permanent Council  
17 January 2023**

*in response to the address by  
the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia A.Mirzoyan*

Mr. Chair,

The Delegation of Azerbaijan considers the OSCE as a useful platform to discuss full adherence to and implementation of the principles and commitments reflected in the OSCE documents and decisions, starting from the Helsinki Final Act by all participating States. In this regard, we would like to respond to the references to Azerbaijan made by the Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and share our vision for peace and security in the South Caucasus.

Compliance with international law and good neighbourly relations are the main objectives to which Armenia should finally begin aspiring. Unfortunately, today's address has been another missed opportunity for Armenia to embrace peace efforts in the region. Sadly, this platform was used another time to spread false accusations, distortions and deceptions with the intention of this participating State to cover-up its continuous and systematic efforts, both in rhetoric and actions, with the aim to evade the implementation of its commitments and all obligations under international law, in particular respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

In this context, references by the Foreign Minister of Armenia to so called "Nagorno Karabakh", a fictitious entity set up by Armenia in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan, are unacceptable. This entity was denied any recognition by the entire international community, including the OSCE and its participating States. It was ultimately nothing other than the product of aggression, ethnic cleansing and racial discrimination against Azerbaijan and a cover-up for Armenia's almost three decades of occupation of my country's territories in blatant violation of international law, well-known resolutions of the UNSC and the OSCE principles and commitments.

The trilateral statement of November 2020 put an end to the military occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan by Armenia for almost three decades. Azerbaijan restored its previously infringed sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is the triumph of international law and justice. The trilateral statement provides clear guidance for attaining sustainable peace, security and stability in our region through implementation of concrete measures specified in this document.

The scale of devastation evidenced in the liberated territories is shocking. Most cities, towns and villages of Azerbaijan were razed to the ground. Thousands of cultural objects and religious sites were looted, vandalized and destroyed. Immediately after the end of the conflict, Azerbaijan has engaged in large-scale reconstruction works in the liberated territories. The traces of occupation and its negative consequences are being eliminated and the return to normal life is well underway. Enabling hundreds of thousands of IDPs to return to their homes in safety and in dignity, and ensuring peaceful life in the liberated territories are the absolute priorities for the Government of Azerbaijan. We have already accomplished reconstruction of infrastructure and facilities, such as highways and airports. The first group of families has recently returned to the Aghali village in the liberated Zangilan district of Azerbaijan, which was rebuilt based on a "smart village" concept. Since

November 2020, some 4,5 billion USD has been allocated from the State budget to the reconstruction effort.

On internal track, Azerbaijan is resolute to reintegrate its citizens of Armenian origin into its political, social, and economic space in accordance with the legislation and Constitution of Azerbaijan, guaranteeing equal rights to all of its citizens regardless of their national or ethnic origin. To this end, Azerbaijan has taken consistent and successful efforts to build interactions with local Armenian residents, thus solving important issues of water, transportation and energy supply in the region. These contacts need to be encouraged and sustained. However, Azerbaijan will not engage with such individuals as Ruben Vardanyan with dubious record, who was implanted into the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan to derail the fragile peace-building process.

Despite devastating consequences and unhealed wounds of war and occupation, it was Azerbaijan which, after the end of the conflict, initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations with Armenia based on five basic principles that include mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders, and underscored the pressing need for concrete results on three specific tracks forming the agenda of bilateral discussions, namely, the delimitation and demarcation of the State border; the soonest conclusion of a peace treaty; and the opening of transport communications in the region. For the past two years my country has been demonstrating strong political will to promote the peace agenda.

At the meetings held last year in Brussels, Prague and Sochi at the highest level both sides confirmed their mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders. This can lead to and provide a good basis for the peace treaty.

Azerbaijan has also undertaken efforts to start the process of delimitation and demarcation of state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The September 2022 armed provocation by Armenia along the border showed that there is an urgent necessity to start as soon as possible the process of delimitation and demarcation of state border without preconditions and unfounded allegations, especially by third parties.

Azerbaijan is also on the record for tirelessly promoting unblocking of all transportation and communication links in the region in line with the trilateral statement.

However, despite the strong support from the international community for this initiative and the diplomatic efforts made to move the normalization agenda forward, the progress remains limited on the above-mentioned three tracks. Armenia seems to stick to its past practice of imitation of negotiations and, instead of good-faith implementation of its commitments, continues to artificially delay the practical work on different tracks by putting forward preconditions.

Armenia has not withdrawn fully its armed forces from the territories of Azerbaijan, as stipulated in the November 10 trilateral statement, and continues a variety of military activities within the territories of Azerbaijan. Armenia still refuses to return to Azerbaijan eight enclave villages along the border that the Armenian forces occupied in the 1990s. Illegal military build-up, rotation of Armenia's armed forces and illegal armed formations, illegal transfer of weapons and personnel to the territory of Azerbaijan through the Lachin road is a blatant violation of the trilateral statement, which envisaged the use of this road for humanitarian purposes only for the movement of citizens, vehicles and goods.

Transfer via the Lachin road and implantation in the territories of Azerbaijan of new anti-personnel mines produced in Armenia in 2021, i.e. after the signing of the trilateral statement in November 2020, is one of the major threats to the large-scale restoration and reconstruction work carried out in the post-conflict period and to the civilian population. Since August 2022, some 2728 pieces of anti-personnel landmines produced in Armenia in 2021 have been found in the territories of Azerbaijan.

The mines already killed or maimed some 279 innocent Azerbaijanis. Planting of mines demonstrates intention of Armenia to inflict as much human cost as possible on Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, Armenia is yet to unblock all economic and transport links in the region that would allow unimpeded, I would like to underline, unimpeded movement of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions between mainland Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic as envisaged by Article 9 of the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement. Attempts to disrupt talks on the reopening of communications by introducing new elements after almost two years of negotiations are indicative that Armenia is not genuinely interested in fulfilment of its relevant obligations. We are of the view that opening of Zangezur corridor will create immense opportunities first and foremost for Armenia.

Of particular concern is that the Lachin road is being misused by Armenia not only for unlawful military activities, but also for trafficking of natural resources from the territories of Azerbaijan to Armenia. Over the past decades, Azerbaijan presented irrefutable evidence attesting to the direct involvement of Armenia in unlawful economic and other activities in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan for its own economic gain in flagrant violation of international law. It is continuation of this deplorable practice accompanied with environmental damage and denial of access of the relevant Azerbaijani authorities to the mineral deposits to conduct on-site monitoring, environmental assessment, cadastral accounting of property and natural resources inventory, which caused justified indignation of the public in Azerbaijan and led to peaceful protests continuing to date.

The Delegation of Azerbaijan has already informed the Permanent Council and we would like to reiterate today again that Azerbaijan has not put any restriction on the traffic along the Lachin road. Nor did the protesters declare an intention to block the traffic along the road. The news reports and videos disseminated through social media testify to the unhindered passage of the various kinds of vehicles along the road, including civilian and emergency vehicles and those of the ICRC.

The claims regarding alleged humanitarian consequences of the situation are equally false. This is nothing other than another manifestation of reckless manipulation by Armenia of the situation for obvious malign political purposes. There is no impediment whatsoever as to the supply of goods for the use of local residents or in terms of delivery of essential medical services. Nevertheless, the Government of Azerbaijan has taken seriously the possible negative impact of the situation, and on several occasions over the past weeks declared its readiness to address any humanitarian concern of our citizens of Armenian origin on the ground. Between 12 December 2022 – the date when the peaceful protests started and 15 January 2023, a total of 644 vehicles of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, the ICRC and local Armenian residents passed in both directions along the Lachin road without any impediment. From 5 to 15 January 2023, the daily average of vehicles passing through the road in both directions has been 30. Most of them were heavy duty vehicles carrying foodstuff and medical supplies to Khankendi.

At the same time, we observe attempts by the Armenian side to obstruct the use of the road by the local Armenian residents in order to exploit the present situation to divert the attention of the international community from non-implementation by this country of its commitments under the trilateral statement. The Armenian side bears full responsibility for any possible consequences of these actions.

The sooner the legitimate concerns of Azerbaijani authorities and the general public with regard to abuse of the road for unlawful exploitation of resources and for military purposes will be addressed, the sooner the present situation will be resolved.

As far as the references to the Minsk Group are concerned, the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been resolved and its consequences, including occupation of the territories of

Azerbaijan, which the Minsk Group had been called to eliminate, ultimately have been eliminated by politico-military means without any role of the Minsk Group whatsoever. The Minsk Group as an obsolete structure is totally dysfunctional for the last two years. References to this structure only feed into false expectations and illusions, sustain revanchist attitudes still prevailing in Armenia and raise tensions. The bilateral discussions between Azerbaijan and Armenia on post-conflict normalization are conducted outside the framework of the OSCE. Armenia must acknowledge this reality and act accordingly.

We urge Armenia, if this country is genuinely interested in peace and stability in the region, to abandon all activities and warmongering rhetoric targeting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan; cease its attempts to undermine the normalization process and implement fully its obligations under the trilateral statements. Armenia 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 on the basis of respect to their sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensure that necessary further steps are taken in this direction. This has no alternative for long-term peace and stability in the region.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the objectives of a peaceful, secure, stable and prosperous region and will continue its efforts towards that end.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.