

**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 22nd
Regular Meeting of HCoC**

15-16 June 2023

Mr. Chairman,

Let me express our gratitude to the delegation of Nigeria for all the work and efforts undertaken during its HCoC chairmanship. We also congratulate the Ireland for the assuming chairmanship. Our delegation would also like to thank Austria for its efficient support to the Code as the Immediate Central Contact in Vienna.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Azerbaijan fully supports the principles enshrined in the HCoC and submit its Annual Declaration timely and regularly.

On general note, we remind the Armenian side that the reference it makes in his statement is the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan. Also, referring to the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan is an attempt to interfere with the internal affairs of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to draw attention of distinguished delegations to use by Armenia of “Iskander-M” tactical ballistic missiles against Azerbaijan. On 8 November 2020, Armenia launched from its Vardenis region three “Iskander-M” tactical ballistic missiles to the direction of Shusha city of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) found and identified wreckages of the two non-export operational-tactical missile system “Iskander-M” in the city of Shusha, Azerbaijan. The geographic coordinates of the location where the missile parts were found and other details of this launch are distributed to Subscribing States through restricted website of HCoC on 25 June 2021.

Since 2017, Armenia has reported in the framework of HCoC that it possesses the “Iskander-E” (9K720E) ballistic missile system, which is an export variant of it. However, in its annual declaration submitted to the Secretariat of the HCoC. Armenia did not declare its possession of “Iskander-M” ballistic missiles system, which possesses a maximum range of 500 km and carries payloads between 480 and 700 kg.

Armenia's clandestine acquisition of "Iskander-M" missiles and not reporting it through the international confidence-building mechanisms, including HCOC undermine transparency measures of those mechanisms.

Moreover, acquisition by Armenia of "Iskander-M" is inconsistent with the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which seeks to curb missile proliferation. It is also in clear violation of HCOC supplementing the MTCR since 2002. The States subscribing to HCOC resolved to implement the General Measures, which, *inter alia*, includes "[t]o curb and prevent the proliferation of Ballistic Missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, both at a global and regional level, through multilateral, bilateral and national endeavors."

The Republic of Azerbaijan calls upon the international community to take the acquisition and use of "Iskander-M" missile by Armenia with utmost seriousness. States subscribers to HCOC should express serious concern with this deplorable fact of illicit transfer or smuggling of this type of deadly weapon and to exert political pressure on Armenia to reveal all the details of this acquisition and circumstances of the use of "Iskander-M" missiles against Azerbaijan.

Investigation of this acquisition, punishment of the perpetrators and prevention of illicit transfer or smuggling of such weapons to Armenia in the future is necessity.

Along with "Iskander-M" missiles, Armenia also used more than twenty other types of ballistic missiles, including "SCUD / Elbrus" and "Tochka-U" causing enormous human losses, damage to residential areas and infrastructure in Azerbaijan.

In fact, Armenia followed the same playbook i.e., the tactic of targeting the civilian population as a means of warfare during the 44 days war in November 2020. Armenia's attacks two years ago again involved the use of discriminate and prohibited weapons against densely populated Azerbaijani cities without any military necessity. Only, one such attack on 28 October 2020, killed 21 civilians and wounded 70 in Barda, Azerbaijan. Armenia's another barrage of attacks on 11 and 17 October 2020, launched by Elbrus/SCUD ballistic missiles against the residential block in Ganja, second largest city of Azerbaijan, killed 25 and wounded 84 civilians.

By such acts, Armenia ignored a vital principle of distinction between military and civilians which sits at the core of *jus in bello* and generally, international humanitarian law. Deliberate, systematic and indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilian objects by the armed forces of Armenia constituted a clear and gross violation of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its Additional Protocols, and qualifies as a war crime.

Armenia must be condemned in strongest terms for the use of ballistic missile against civilian objects and must put an end to such irresponsible and provocative behavior and aggressive actions that threaten regional peace and security.

Armenia must implement transparency and confidence-building measures related to its ballistic missiles program and act accordingly while submitting its annual declaration within the framework of HCOC.

Against the backdrop of Armenia's irresponsible use of its ballistic missiles against civilian targets, other countries should stop supplying Armenia with ballistic missiles and other deadly weapon systems.

Acquisition and use by Armenia of "Iskander-M" missile against civilian object is an open challenge to the missile technology control regime. It is obvious that the existing architecture of non-proliferation and export control instruments, in particular export controls and transparency and confidence-building measures envisaged under MTCR and HCOC are not sufficient to curb destabilizing proliferation and use of ballistic missiles and must be urgently strengthened.

In view of direct threat to the national and regional security, Azerbaijan is seeking access to more information under HCOC confidence-building measures concerning the transfer of missile systems to Armenia and its current stockpiles of such weapons.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.