



ԵԱՀԿ-ՈՒՄ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄՇՏԱԿԱՆ ՆԵՐԿԱՅԱՑՈՒՑՉՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**In response to the Address of H.E. Bujar Osmani,
OSCE Chairman-in-Office,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia,
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1404th Special Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

12 January, 2023

The Delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia H.E. Bujar Osmani to the Permanent Council. North Macedonia assumes the Chairpersonship of this Organization at times of unprecedented challenges to the European security architecture.

Distinguished Minister, we have already had an opportunity to offer Armenia's position with regards to the priorities of your Chairpersonship last September.

Today these priorities have been crystallized and we are pleased that your overarching goal during your tenure is to prevent wars and human suffering. We see strong merit in steering the OSCE under the motto "**It's About People**". We hope that this approach would be applicable in the case of all peoples residing in the OSCE area without discrimination and political or geopolitical considerations. In this context Armenia will support any effort of North Macedonia to reach out to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. And we expect that the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh will remain on the agenda of this Organization as it was in the past, and that the current Chairmanship will pay due attention to this issue.

Mr. Chair,

For already a month Azerbaijan is blocking the Lachin Corridor - the only humanitarian lifeline connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and the outer world, in clear violation of paragraph 6 of the 9 November, 2020 Trilateral Statement. For one month Azerbaijan is blocking free and safe movement of citizens, vehicles and cargo to and from Nagorno-Karabakh. Unfortunately, the Russian peacekeeping contingent, which

according to the Trilateral Statement exercises the control over the Lachin Corridor, has so far not succeeded in restoring the agreed regime.

Despite the claims by the authorities of Azerbaijan that the Lachin Corridor is open, the Corridor is effectively closed, since only the vehicles of the peacekeepers and of the International Committee of the Red Cross are allowed to pass. The ICRC has also been allowed to transport a handful of patients in life-threatening situations to the Republic of Armenia.

The attempts at justification of this illegal blockade that were voiced by the highest authorities of Azerbaijan does not bear scrutiny. Moreover, after one month of staged protests by fake environmentalists Azerbaijani authorities publicly accept that those who are blocking the Lachin Corridor are their agents. This latest coercive action together with previous aggressive actions carried out by Azerbaijan against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh are part of the consistent policy of forced deportation and ethnic cleansing of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

As we speak now, the humanitarian crisis in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) is worsening with each passing hour. The blockade and isolation of 120 thousand people, if continued, would turn into a humanitarian catastrophe. At least 1,100 civilians have been stranded along the blocked Corridor for days, unable to return to their homes. 270 children have been separated from their families and have to find temporary shelter across Armenia, while their parents and relatives remain in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in isolation. Healthcare and social services have been obstructed. There is shortage of food and other essential goods as every day hundreds of tons of supplies remain undelivered. The danger of malnutrition and eventually famine is looming. Three days now that the electricity power line from Armenia to Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) has been damaged in the area controlled by Azerbaijan and specialists are not allowed to conduct the repair work.

Mr. Chair,

We thank all those OSCE participating States who condemned the illegal blockade of Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan. The current situation in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) is close to turning into a full-fledged humanitarian catastrophe and atrocity crime. Thus, immediate and unconditional unblocking of the Lachin Corridor and the restoration of safe, secure and unimpeded connection between Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) is of vital importance.

We urge the current OSCE Chairpersonship and participating States, in line with the Organization's early warning and early action mandates, to take resolute actions to unblock the Lachin Corridor.

Your Excellency, you are absolutely right when saying that the future generations will judge us for our actions. But they will equally judge us for our inactions, for our indifference and the deafening silence.

Mr. Chairman,

Since your last appearance at the Permanent Council in September last year, in fact much has changed in our region.

On 13-14 September, 2022 Azerbaijan unleashed unprovoked aggression against sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia. Azerbaijani armed forces deliberately targeted civilian infrastructures and peaceful settlements. This has been the third large-scale offensive against Armenia since the signing of the Trilateral statement of 9 November, 2020. This aggression resulted in occupation of around 140 square km of sovereign territory of Armenia and 233 casualties, including among civilians. During this aggression Azerbaijani armed forces committed war crimes, extrajudicial killings, subjected Armenian military personnel, including women to the most shocking and horrific humiliation and torture.

We appreciate the fact that many OSCE participating States have recognized the violation of territorial integrity of Armenia, pointed out the aggressor, called for the withdrawal of Azerbaijani forces from the sovereign territory of Armenia and demanded to bring the perpetrators of the war crimes to justice.

We express our appreciation also for the rapid deployment of the OSCE needs assessment mission to Armenia. We took note of the Conclusions and Recommendations distributed by the Chair. At the same time, Mission's observations and report should not be an end in itself, but a means for the OSCE to further monitor the situation on the ground.

The continuous international presence on the ground is imperative, given the continuous attempts by Azerbaijan to cover up its unprovoked and unjustifiable aggression by shifting the blame on Armenia and putting forward territorial claims against Armenia on a daily basis.

Mr. Chair,

Continuous military aggressions carried out by Azerbaijan against Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in the post-war period, recurring provocations on the border and along the Line of Contact in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), refusal to return POW's and address the unresolved issues related to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict undermine the efforts towards establishing regional stability and security.

However, the Government of Armenia has shown a political will to open an era of peace and stability in the South Caucasus. To this end Armenia is ready to proceed with unblocking of communications, in good faith and in line with the commitments undertaken under the Trilateral Statement. But to have peace you need an interlocutor, a reliable, honest and sincere interlocutor, which obviously is not the case.

In closing, let me wish every success to you, Mr. Minister, and your able team here in Vienna led by our distinguished colleague Ambassador Igor Djundev.

Thank you.