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PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**in response to the Address of H.E. Ms. Dominique Hasler, Foreign Affairs,
Education and Sport of Liechtenstein, President of the Committee
of Ministers of the Council of Europe
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1459th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

01 February 2024

The Delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes H.E. Ms. Dominique Hasler, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport of Liechtenstein, the President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and thanks her for the comprehensive address.

Both the OSCE and the Council of Europe, as regional organisations, share the same goal of promoting peace, security and stability in our wider region through the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democracy. Armenia has consistently advocated for a complementary approach in utilising the comparative advantages of our organisations without unnecessary duplication, especially in the four priority areas of cooperation between two organisations.

Among the advantages of the Council of Europe is its experience in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination. We highly value the activities of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. The reports of the ECRI reveal the real problems of extremism, racism, radicalization, and hate crimes and provide clear-cut recommendations to address the identified challenges. Regrettably, the anti-Armenian policy of hatred, which has also been revealed in a number of reports of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, has significantly increased before, during and after the 2020 war of aggression, which consequently led to numerous atrocity crimes.

Distinguished Minister,

Armenia also highly values the work and efforts of the European Court of Human Rights; therefore, we are pleased that strengthening the ECHR, particularly improving the execution of judgements, is among your priorities. As you may know, we face continuous disregard for the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on the implementation of interim measures to provide information on Armenian hostages. In this regard, practical measures are required for the full and unconditional execution of judgements. And we expect that under your guiding leadership, this issue will be duly addressed.

Excellency,

We welcome the priorities of Liechtenstein's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, in particular that of strengthening the fundamental values of human rights. Today, one of the persistent problems in the OSCE area is the violation of human rights under the pretext of combating terrorism. The massive use of force against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh last September is a case in point. In this regard, the Council of Europe former Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović, in her observations following her visit to Nagorno-Karabakh in October 2023, exposed the false narratives concerning the blockade of the Lachin Corridor and the forced displacement of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. During her visit to Nagorno-Karabakh, the Commissioner witnessed, and I quote, “empty streets, abandoned business premises, shops and restaurants, shattered shop windows, abandoned furniture and personal belongings, including children’s toys left in the open, laundry still hanging outside empty flats and almost no sign of the presence of civilians. Only pets searching for food were noticed in various parts of the city. All of these and many other signs suggest that the population’s departure happened in a great hurry”. In other words, this confirms the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh in gross violations of international humanitarian law and the fundamental human rights of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The complete ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh from its indigenous population has further endangered Armenian cultural heritage. The state-sponsored policy of deliberate destruction and alteration of the identity of cultural heritage sites represents a challenge not just to Armenia but to all of humanity. The gravity of the situation requires urgent efforts by the international community. In this regard, we support the deployment of UNESCO's independent expert mission to the entire territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, a mission that has thus far been obstructed.

Distinguished Minister,

I should recall that upon accession to the Council of Europe, the countries of the South Caucasus agreed to honour certain commitments among them, “to continue efforts to settle the conflict by peaceful means only” and to settle international disputes by peaceful means, resolutely rejecting any threat or use of force against the neighbours. However, today we are faced with the occupation of more than 200 sq. km of the sovereign territory of Armenia, an ongoing economic blockade, ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, and last but not least, new territorial claims and the threat of use of force against Armenia, which are in stark contrast to the undertaken commitments, seriously undermining the efforts aimed at establishing sustainable peace and security in the region.

Nevertheless, Armenia is firmly committed to establishing lasting peace and security in our region. With the “Crossroad of Peace” project, the Government of Armenia reaffirmed its determination to contribute its share to the region’s peace and stability by actively engaging in diplomatic efforts. To this end, we need the strong support of international actors, including the Council of Europe.

Madame Chairperson,

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe. This provides an important opportunity to demonstrate a strong commitment to the principles of human rights and address the needs and security of the people affected by conflicts in our region as well. In conclusion, let me once again reiterate Armenia’s full support to Lichtenstein in fulfilling its important task and wish every success in the months to come.

Thank you.