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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

**Statement**

**in response to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights H.E. Volker Türk  
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan  
at the 1428<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

*08 June, 2023*

Mr. Chairman,

Armenia warmly welcomes H.E. Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and thanks him for the interesting presentation.

Armenia reiterates its unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights. This year again, Armenia received the highest rankings in the region by the World Press Freedom Index and the Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit to name but a few.

2023 is an important year for the Human Rights. We commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of two landmark documents. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was the first human rights treaty unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948. A day later the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted.

75 years ago, we have committed never again to allow the scourge of genocide to happen. We have uttered “Never Again” so many times since, yet genocides have not been fenced off. Tendencies of radicalism, exclusion and hatred are rattling the international agenda. Particularly troubling is the conspicuous decline in the international commitment to multilateralism and respect for human rights at a time when we need more international cooperation and stronger institutions for this.

For 25 years since 1998 Armenia has been consistently working within the UN and with its many partners towards raising awareness of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, of the continued risks and challenges related to atrocity crimes, and towards building legal and institutional capacity of prevention.

Prevention at the international level requires continued integrated approach and action across the board, intertwined with the three pillars of security, development and human rights. The human rights and preventive machinery within the UN system has over years generated considerable capacity to detect risk situations, to gather and analyze early warning signs and to deliver it to the membership.

Armenia shares the views on the interlinkage of the peace and human rights. In this regard, the decisive actions of the Office can be crucial in addressing the human rights violations inflicted upon people affected by the conflict situations. The human rights and fundamental freedoms should be respected, protected and promoted without distinction of any kind. It is our strong conviction that the human rights violations should receive adequate and equal treatment in all conflict situations. There cannot be a hierarchy of the suffering of the people neither with regard to the geopolitical importance of the conflict, nor with regard to its scale and magnitude. There cannot be any kind of consideration that can overshadow the breaches of human rights in one case at the expense of the other. Nobody should be left behind.

In this context, Armenia believes that the OHCHR should multiply its prevention efforts aimed at leveraging human rights in reducing the risks of conflicts, violence and humanitarian crisis situations. The public statements and warnings of the High Commissioner can act as a valuable restraining and prevention tool.

We also value the search activities conducted by the Office in the conflict torn areas that can enhance the early warning capacity of the OHCHR. The UN and its agencies have been bestowed with a universal mandate and should enjoy unconditional, unimpeded, unhindered and unfettered access to the people in need.

Distinguished High Commissioner, in this regard we would like to recall the public pledge of your predecessor to seek access to Nagorno-Karabakh. We also welcome your calls to immediately and fully ensure free and safe movement through Lachin corridor. However, the Lachin corridor remains blocked even after the calls to ensure freedom of movement made also by many other international actors, including the UN Secretary General, the UN Special Procedure Mandate Holders and the binding order adopted by the International Court of Justice. All early warning signs of the looming humanitarian catastrophe are in place, since Azerbaijan, which is responsible for this inhumane siege of 120.000 people in Nagorno-Karabakh does nothing to comply with these calls and the international human rights obligations.

Hence, we believe that more action, more decisive intervention is necessary from the UN Human Rights machinery to address the blockade of Lachin corridor and the devastating human rights and humanitarian situation that it continues to cause in Nagorno-Karabakh. The international human rights system cannot afford another ethnic cleansing, another atrocity crime to happen just in front of our eyes, especially when there are so many early warning signs.

We strongly call upon you, distinguished High Commissioner to remain seized of the matter.

In particular, we believe that the search capabilities of the OHCHR should be fully utilized in Lachin corridor, in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as on the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan to identify the human rights challenges caused by the conflict and to tackle them in accordance to the human rights commitments, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mr. Chairman,

The respect and promotion of all human rights presents an opportunity for building peace, stability and sustainable development. On the other hand, the current crisis of trust and confidence is driven from systematic and grave violations of human rights,

the failure to adhere to global human rights instruments, as well as their misuse and hateful rhetoric that pose challenges to international human rights standards. The OHCHR has a central role in helping states in countering hate speech, discrimination and dehumanization, which can pave the way for building trust and confidence among the state actors and other stakeholders affected by the conflict situations.

It is equally important to address the growing threats to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms through multilateralism and true partnerships, with engagement of regional and sub-regional actors. Armenia was glad to contribute to this end by taking part in the core group of penholders of the most recent Human Rights Council resolution on Cooperation with Regional Human Rights Organizations.

Effective and inclusive multilateralism is essential to address grave violations of human rights. Multilateralism should be amplified and strengthened aimed to achieve justice and accountability for the crimes committed against humanity, to prevent their recurrence in the future. The productive multilateral cooperation also leads to sustainable development. The protection and promotion of international human rights standards should define the sustainable development to ensure that no one is left behind.

For this purpose, the international human rights frameworks should be refined to adapt to challenges of today and among the other things to dwell on the increasing challenges and risks stemming from the use of ICTs. The OHCHR and Human Rights Bodies should be utilized to their best and maximum to ensure full respect for human rights also online.

The rapid growth of the Artificial Intelligence and its use in military sphere, including through the lethal autonomous weapons is an area of particular concern. We believe that the UN human rights machinery should take a decisive role in countering the threats that it poses to the human rights.

Finally, Armenia strongly believes that the OHCHR can consider highlighting the positive examples of the democratic changes happening in the UN member states and regions. In the environment that is generally considered as a global decline of democratic standards, positive examples can be highlighted as a best practice for the protection and promotion of the human rights in all corners of the world.

Distinguished High Commissioner, Armenia is fully cognizant of the challenges you face in fulfilling your most important tasks, especially in the current turbulent international atmosphere. We wish you all the success in your endeavors.

Thank you.