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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT

UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security
as delivered by the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia at the 1023th Plenary Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation

28 September 2022

Mr. Chairperson,

We commend the Belgian FSC Chairmanship for choosing this topic as one of the priorities for this trimester. In this vein, I would like to thank the distinguished speakers for their thought-provoking presentations.

Distinguished colleagues,

The Women, Peace and Security agenda and the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, which represents a milestone in the struggle for the fundamental human rights of women, are also among the priorities of the Government of the Republic of Armenia. We believe that the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in all spheres of public life, including the defence sector, are key prerequisites for sustainable development and, in particular, for sustainable and lasting peace. It is with this understanding that Armenia has developed a solid legal framework and has taken concrete measures aimed at increasing the full participation of women in the security sector, including in the armed forces, promoting their political participation and economic empowerment.

In 2013, the "Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men", was adopted in Armenia, which provided for the creation of equal opportunities for men and women to participate in state governance. It should be noted that in Armenia women have a significant representation in the Government, Parliament as well as at the municipal level.

Certain measures have also been taken to increase the number of women in the military. This goal is included in the Modernization Programme of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia for 2018-2024. The National Strategy for Human Rights Protection for 2020-2022 also lists the promotion of the involvement of women in the Armed Forces as one of the main activities.

In 2019, the Directorate for Work with Women was established within the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia, which is a specialized unit dealing with the issues of women in military service.

Distinguished colleagues,

The Republic of Armenia has developed the Second National Action Plan for 2022 – 2024 in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, thereby reaffirming the country's commitment to continue work on Women, Peace and Security issues. The Plan builds on the analysis of the previous National Action Plan and takes into account achievements and lessons learned.

As a country at the forefront of the fight against mass atrocities, Armenia gives high priority to the role of women and girls in the context of genocide prevention in its NAP.

In Resolution 1325, the United Nations recognised that women and children constitute the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and are increasingly being targeted.

Thus, the Second National Action Plan of Armenia also reflects the issues and challenges faced by women in the border regions of Armenia and in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) as a result of the hostilities unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh in autumn 2020. The Plan has been developed on the principle of inclusive participation, in particular, with the involvement of non-governmental organisations and women affected by the war, including those displaced from Artsakh.

Mr. Chairman,

While Resolution 1325 also calls on parties to armed conflict to protect the rights of women, including the safeguarding of women and girls from gender-based violence, cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of women, including female service members, POWs, and civilians continue to occur in many conflict zones.

People in Armenia and in Nagorno-Karabakh have witnessed numerous war crimes and egregious violations of international humanitarian law, both against civilians and military personnel. In 2016, during the 4-day war of aggression of Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh, in the village of Talish, the Azerbaijani soldiers brutally murdered three elderly members of an Armenian family and mutilated their bodies. Two of the victims were women.

In 2020, during another war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh, which lasted 44 days, a number of Armenian women, including civilians and military personnel, were brutally killed. There were also cases of torture and mutilation of bodies. Among such victims were Nina Davityan and Yelena Hakobyan, 83-year-old and 68-year-old female residents of the Hadrut region of Artsakh, who were found decapitated in their houses. In addition, the armed forces of Azerbaijan, using large-calibre rocket systems, deliberately targeted a maternity hospital in the capital of Artsakh, Stepanakert.

During this military aggression, 4 civilian women went missing, including 76-year-old Elsa Sargsyan, mother and daughter Varya and Anahit Tunyan, all three were residents of the currently occupied Hadrut region of Artsakh. Another female civilian, 70-year old Vardush Davtyan, along with her husband Benik Avtandilyan and their driver Davit Isahakyan, were captured after the ceasefire, on 11 November 2020, near the city of Shushi, when returning from Armenia to their native village in Nagorno-Karabakh. Later Davit Isahakyan, the driver, was returned to Armenia with a group of Armenian prisoners of war, but there is still no information about the fate of the elderly couple.

As a result of the 44-day war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh, a total of 80 civilians were killed, including 12 women. More than 90 thousand people were forcibly displaced, 88 percent of whom were women and children.

The lack of a proper and adequate reaction of the international community to the illegal use of force by Azerbaijan, including the strong condemnation of war crimes and other gross violations of the IHL, largely contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of impunity and served as an incitement to new aggressions and the recurrence of such crimes.

Dear colleagues,

On 13 September this year, Azerbaijan launched a new large-scale aggression against Armenia with the use of heavy weapons, including multiple launch rocket systems and combat UAVs. As a result, at least 7600 people were displaced, most of them women, children, elderly people and persons with disabilities, 7 civilians were seriously injured, including an elderly woman.

During this military aggression, the Azerbaijani armed forces brutally abused the bodies of several Armenian female soldiers who died defending their homeland.

I would like to bring to your attention just one specific episode of the horrifying war crimes committed by the armed forces of Azerbaijan during the recent aggression against Armenia. In particular, I want to draw your attention to the case of Ms. Susana Margaryan, whose desecrated and dismembered body was put on display through social networks. The perpetrators left a message reading “Yashma” (the code name for the Azerbaijani special forces) on her naked body. In addition, her hands were placed above

the head, a severed finger stuck out of her mouth; one of her eyes was closed, while the other had a reverted eyeball placed on her closed eyelid.

A Special Report by the Human Rights Defender of Armenia has already been distributed under the reference number SEC.DEL/465/22, for those who are interested to get more details and to follow up on the egregious war crimes committed by the armed forces of Azerbaijan, including the desecration and mutilation of the dead bodies of female service members of the Armed forces of Armenia, during the large-scale aggression launched on 13 September.

This is the true face of Azerbaijan and its armed forces driven by complete disregard for its obligations under international law and the OSCE commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

The failure of the international community to properly assess, condemn and prevent such violations is a major factor influencing the willingness of women to join the Armed Forces.

Therefore, we believe that, while promoting the women, peace and security agenda, it is essential that the international community does not turn a blind eye to such cases of egregious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and takes adequate and effective measures to end impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Thank you.