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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

in response to Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia, at the 1270th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

04 June 2020

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome High Commissioner Lamberto Zannier back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his detailed report.

Protection and promotion of national minorities remain high on the agenda of the Armenian Government. In line with the constitution of Armenia on 9 December 2018, representatives of four national minorities of Armenia, namely Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians and Kurds were elected to the National Assembly. Head of local authorities in a number of communities are also minority representatives (*those are Dimitrov, Verin Dvin, Arzni, Alagyaz, Fioletovo, Kanch, Hako, Sorik, Talik, Metsadzor, Shamiram, Arevut, Ddmasar, Otevan communities*). National minorities also benefit from primary education provided in their mother tongue. The Government is further improving the legal safeguards for the protection of the rights of national minorities and for the sake of time I will not dwell on them.

Mr. Zannier,

Education has an extremely important bridging feature when it comes to the relations between minority and majority. In this vein, we support your balanced approach on the teaching of the state and minority languages. We commend your efforts as well as those of Georgian authorities aimed at promoting mother tongue-based multilingual education in the schools and preschool establishments with minority languages in the Armenian minority-populated regions. Another good example is the course on tolerance and diversity for ethnic minority and majority students.

Mr. Zannier,

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forward new pretexts for stigmatization and scapegoating of representatives of national minorities and different ethnic groups. Therefore, we believe that your swift reaction to such instances would be an important early warning and deterring instrument.

We also draw your attention to the recent cases of vandalism and desecration of churches, shrines and holy places belonging to minority and ethnic groups. One of recent such examples is the attack on the Armenian church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator in Turkey.

We also would like to stress the need to constantly monitor the growing instances of manifestations of hatred directed against specific minority groups, especially when promoted and condoned at the highest political level. In this context we also stress the importance of Bolzano/Bozen recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations as a useful framework for addressing the rights of national minorities under certain circumstances.

High Commissioner,

We note your intention to prepare for the celebration of two anniversaries in 2021, namely the 1996 Hague Recommendation regarding the Education Right of National Minorities and the 2006 Recommendation on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies. We would recommend looking into and analyzing thoroughly the cases when the police itself is involved or instigates violence against ethnic minorities. The case in point is the history of anti-Armenian pogroms in the late 80s and early 90s. If those important instruments existed back then, many conflicts of the OSCE area could have been avoided, provided of course that they've had been adhered to in good faith.

In conclusion, I would like to express our appreciation for your, Mr. Zannier, and your team's efforts in fulfilling your important mission.

Thank you.