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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT

**in response to the address
by the Director of ODIHR, Mr. Matteo Mecacci
as delivered by the Delegation of Armenia
at the 1395th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

20 October 2022

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes Director Matteo Mecacci back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his address.

Against the backdrop of the current security crisis, when issues of hard security take precedence over issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms, we must be aware that the current threats and challenges are the product of previous suppressions and violations of individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms, which were often ignored. We continue to insist that almost all existing conflicts in the OSCE area are the result of flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Similarly, the fragmentation of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms has contributed to the erosion of the concept of comprehensive and indivisible security in the OSCE region. These mistakes of the past must be rectified and, to that end, reaffirming our commitment to the universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms both in words and in deeds, without any distinction or political considerations, is the best recipe.

Director Mecacci,

Armenia's cooperation with the ODIHR is premised on an open dialogue and reliable partnership, covering everything from democratic elections to freedom of assembly, to hate crime issues and many more. It is no exaggeration to say that throughout the years since the restoration of Armenia's independence, the ODIHR has been a valuable partner and guide in implementing democratic reforms, in compliance with OSCE commitments and international standards. Undoubtedly, the history of our cooperation is full of ups and downs, but the established open and honest dialogue has always helped us move forward. We value this co-operation, and would like to maintain and develop it further.

In this regard, we would like to see the ODIHR in action when it comes to the fate of the Armenian prisoners of war remaining in captivity in Azerbaijan and are illegally sentenced to long terms of imprisonment on trumped-up charges, in clear violation of international humanitarian law and the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020.

Dear colleagues,

For nearly two decades, we have continuously drawn the attention of our international partners, in particular the OSCE, to the issue of hate speech and Armenophobia in Azerbaijan, including in the public discourse of political leaders, as well as in school and preschool curricula, which has led to the cultivation and subsequent glorification of hate crimes against Armenians. Unfortunately, these recurrences of state-fueled anti-Armenian hatred were not taken seriously, and today we are reaping the fruits of many years of hatred and Armenophobia propagated at the state level. The recent heinous cases of arbitrary killing and torture of Armenian prisoners of war by Azerbaijani soldiers are the grim consequences of this notorious policy.

This should compel the OSCE to make greater efforts to prevent such crimes and atrocities, including by early warning and early action. We believe that in this context, the OSCE Hate Crime Reporting is an important instrument, which if further developed and improved, can become an indispensable tool to this end.

Mr. Chairman,

Taking this opportunity, the Delegation of Armenia would also like to thank the ODIHR and the Polish OSCE Chairmanship for organizing the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, which provided ample opportunity to draw the attention of the international community to the flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law by Azerbaijan both during its recent aggression against the sovereign territory of Armenia and the 2020 war of aggression against Artsakh.

We also note that there have been certain trial-related innovations, which should be further carefully discussed and assessed. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the main problem of such meetings, be it HDIM or SHDIM, continues to be the destructive engagement and aggressive behaviour of the so-called GONGOs, which significantly narrows the ever-shrinking space for real civil society representatives and undermines genuine exchange and dialogue. Last but not least, the irresponsible and defiant behaviour of such representatives, including cases of harassment of other participants and even panelists, should be subject to thorough scrutiny.

In closing, let me once again express our thanks to you, Director Mecacci, for our dialogue and cooperation, and assure you of Armenia's continued support.

Thank you.