
Chairmanship: Albania**1291st PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

1. Date: Thursday, 26 November 2020 (via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.
Suspended: 1.05 p.m.
Resumed: 3 p.m.
Suspended: 6.15 p.m.
Resumed: 4 p.m. (Friday, 27 November 2020)
Closed: 4.50 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador I. Hasani
Ms. E. Dobrushki

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: **REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE OSCE PRESENCE IN
ALBANIA**

Chairperson, Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania (PC.FR/42/20 OSCE+), Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia and Moldova, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1702/20), United States of America (PC.DEL/1651/20), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1667/20 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/1665/20 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Switzerland (PC.DEL/1676/20 OSCE+), Norway (PC.DEL/1684/20), Albania (PC.DEL/1673/20 OSCE+)

Agenda item 2: **ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE OSCE
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY,
H.E. GEORGE TSERETELI**

Chairperson, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA.GAL/24/20 OSCE+), Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade

Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra and Moldova, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1701/20), Russian Federation, United States of America (PC.DEL/1654/20), Turkey (PC.DEL/1663/20 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1680/20 OSCE+), Georgia (PC.DEL/1689/20 OSCE+), Ukraine (PC.DEL/1658/20), Belarus (PC.DEL/1683/20 OSCE+), Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/1679/20 OSCE+), Uzbekistan, Armenia (PC.DEL/1711/20 OSCE+)

Agenda item 3: TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT FOR PEACE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Chairperson, European Union Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues, Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia and Moldova, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1703/20), United States of America (PC.DEL/1660/20), United Kingdom, Turkey (PC.DEL/1662/20 OSCE+), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1668/20), Serbia (PC.DEL/1669/20 OSCE+), Croatia (PC.DEL/1678/20 OSCE+), Norway (PC.DEL/1685/20), Bosnia and Herzegovina (PC.DEL/1682/20 OSCE+)

Agenda item 4: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson

- (a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea:* Ukraine (PC.DEL/1661/20), Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia and Moldova, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1707/20), United Kingdom, Turkey, Canada (PC.DEL/1700/20 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1677/20 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/1664/20)
- (b) *Situation in Ukraine and the need to implement the Minsk agreements:* Russian Federation, Ukraine
- (c) *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women:* Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender, Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1708/20), United States of America (PC.DEL/1670/20), Iceland (also on behalf of Canada, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom) (PC.DEL/1686/20), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1675/20), Georgia (PC.DEL/1691/20 OSCE+), Ukraine

- (d) *Aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and Armenia with the direct involvement of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters: Armenia (Annex 1)*
- (e) *Situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh: United States of America (PC.DEL/1671/20) (PC.DEL/1694/20), Canada (PC.DEL/1698/20 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Armenia (PC.DEL/1710/20), Azerbaijan (Annex 2), Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Moldova and San Marino, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1705/20), Russian Federation, Turkey, Switzerland*
- (f) *Violation by France of its obligations under international law, undermining its role as a responsible and credible mediator: Azerbaijan (Annex 3), France (PC.DEL/1692/20 OSCE+), Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Canada, Moldova and San Marino, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1704/20), Turkey*

Agenda item 5: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
 CHAIRMANSHIP-IN-OFFICE

Preparations for the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, to be held in a virtual format in Tirana on 3 and 4 December 2020: Chairperson

Agenda item 6: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT

- (a) *Announcement of the distribution of a written report on the activities of the Secretariat: Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General (SEC.GAL/180/20 OSCE+)*
- (b) *Update on the COVID-19 situation across the OSCE's executive structures: Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General (SEC.GAL/180/20 OSCE+)*
- (c) *Update on the COVID-19 situation in the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine: Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General (SEC.GAL/180/20 OSCE+)*
- (d) *Participation of the Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General in the high-level interactive dialogue of the United Nations Secretary-General with the heads of regional and other organizations, held in a virtual format on 23 November 2020: Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General (SEC.GAL/180/20 OSCE+)*
- (e) *Participation of the Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General in the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, held in a virtual format in Geneva on 22 and 23 November 2020: Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General (SEC.GAL/180/20 OSCE+)*

- (f) *Third Vienna Energy Strategy Dialogue, entitled “The implications of the global energy transition” and held in a virtual format on 24 November 2020: Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General (SEC.GAL/180/20 OSCE+)*

Agenda item 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Parliamentary elections in Georgia, held on 31 October and 21 November 2020: Georgia (PC.DEL/1690/20 OSCE+), Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1706/20), Norway (PC.DEL/1693/20), United Kingdom, Canada, United States of America (PC.DEL/1688/20)*
- (b) *Parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, to be held on 17 March 2021: Netherlands (PC.DEL/1695/20 OSCE+)*

4. Next meeting:

To be announced



1291st Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1291, Agenda item 4(d)

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA

Mr. Chairperson,

The statement of 9 November 2020 on the cessation of fire and all hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone put an end to the fighting and prevented further loss of life and human suffering. The more than six weeks of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan with the support and active involvement of Turkey, together with foreign terrorist fighters and jihadist groups, have led to numerous civilian casualties and large-scale destruction of civilian settlements and infrastructure. Owing to the indiscriminate targeting of the civilian population by the Azerbaijani armed forces, more than half of the population of Artsakh had to flee their homes, becoming refugees and displaced persons.

The war crimes committed by the Azerbaijani armed forces during the war are well documented, and we commend the work of those courageous journalists who risked their lives to report on the conflict. We also commend the Human Rights Defenders Offices of Artsakh and Armenia, both of which have been collecting evidence of the violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Azerbaijani armed forces. The latest report, prepared jointly by the Human Rights Defender of Armenia and Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, was issued on 18 November and contains graphic images showing horrific atrocities committed by the Azerbaijani armed forces against soldiers, prisoners of war and captured civilians. Because of the harrowing nature of the images, we decided not to circulate them among participating States. Nevertheless, the report as a whole has been made available to specialized agencies and experts for consideration with a view to possible further measures.

Armenia also applied to the European Court of Human Rights with a request to apply interim measures against Azerbaijan in relation to the latter's degrading and humiliating treatment of nine prisoners of war. The Court granted this request by Armenia and applied interim measures against Azerbaijan, demanding to ensure respect for the rights of prisoners in line with the European Convention for Human Rights and provide them with necessary medical treatment.

Mr. Chairperson,

Thanks to the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces, the people of Artsakh have been able to start returning to their homes. However, despite this positive trend, we are

witnessing some alarming developments, such as killings, abductions, intimidation and threatening of the peaceful population of Artsakh.

One day after the ceasefire, on 11 November, ten Armenian citizens went missing while they were in Nagorno-Karabakh on a humanitarian mission. A few days after their disappearance, Azerbaijani users of social networks began posting videos showing degrading and humiliating treatment of captured Armenian citizens by the Azerbaijani armed forces.

Armenia has filed an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights requesting application of interim measures against Azerbaijan in connection with the abduction of Armenian citizens. Subsequently, the Court granted Armenia's request and applied interim measures against Azerbaijan urging to ensure respect for the Convention rights and of the captives and to provide them with necessary and appropriate treatment. The court also requested information about ten Armenian citizens abducted on 11 November.

There have also been reports of attempts by Azerbaijani soldiers to enter Armenian settlements wearing uniforms with Russian insignia with the aim to terrorize and kidnap civilians.

We believe that these intimidation tactics are aimed at forcing the people of Artsakh to abandon their homeland, and at the same time at dissuading refugees from returning to their homes. We have persistently alerted our international partners to Azerbaijan's policy of seeking to oust the Armenian population from these territories and, thereby, to change the demographic composition of the region.

Mr. Chairperson,

Immediately after gaining control over the territories, the leadership of Azerbaijan, including President Ilham Aliyev, launched a campaign to appropriate the Armenian cultural heritage there, notably churches, monasteries and other religious sites. They claim that all Armenian churches belong to the Caucasian Albanians and try to portray the Azeri people as descendants of the latter, which is clearly absurd to anyone who is even remotely familiar with the history of the migration of Turkic nomads to our region.

Artsakh is an integral and inseparable part of the Armenian cultural landscape. Situated within its territory are 370 Armenian churches dating from the fourth to the eighteenth century; 119 fortresses, some of them built as long ago as the second century BC; and 243 cemeteries dating from the second century BC to the eighteenth century AD. All this belongs to the intangible heritage left to the Armenian people by their ancestors and constitutes part of their identity. If left unprotected in the hands of the Azerbaijani authorities, these cultural and religious sites may well end up being destroyed.

A case in point is the fate of the Armenian cultural heritage in Nakhijevan which has been completely erased by the Azerbaijani authorities after the Armenian population was forced to leave that region.

We hope that the Armenian cultural and religious heritage of Artsakh – in particular the monuments and sites located in the territories which, in accordance with the joint

statement of 9 November, will come under Azerbaijani control – will be in the focus of the international community’s attention. There have been numerous statements calling for the preservation and protection of this heritage, including statements issued by specialized organizations. Faced with these appeals, the Azerbaijani leadership has adopted a new approach: instead of physical destruction, they are now trying to change the history of these sites and monuments in an effort to deny the Armenian people their historical rights to Artsakh as their homeland.

We have already seen disturbing video footage and photographs of Armenian churches and religious monuments desecrated and vandalized by Azerbaijani soldiers.

In this context, we are compelled to warn the international community of the imminent threat of systematic appropriation, alteration and, ultimately, destruction of the Armenian religious and cultural monuments in the territories under the control of Azerbaijan. We urge our international partners and relevant organizations to take urgent measures to ensure the protection and preservation of the Armenian cultural heritage, which is also part of the world heritage.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our delegation has already elaborated on Turkey’s role in unleashing the military aggression and the deployment of foreign terrorist fighters and jihadists in Nagorno-Karabakh, and we have urged Turkey to withdraw its military personnel and weapons from the region, together with all the affiliated foreign terrorist fighters and jihadists.

Regrettably, this has not happened. There have in fact been new reports that Turkey continues to recruit foreign terrorist fighters from Syria and Libya in order to transfer them to Azerbaijan and thence to Nagorno-Karabakh. We already spoke about this at the last Permanent Council meeting. These reports come to confirm that Turkey, which has been assiduously enlisting and deploying foreign terrorist fighters and jihadists to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, has no intention of pulling them out again.

In addition, last week there emerged new reports from open sources indicating that Turkey has begun registering ethnic Turkomans from the Turkish-occupied Kurdish region of Afrin in northern Syria with the aim of resettling them in Artsakh, in particular in the territories occupied as a result of Azerbaijan’s aggression. Seeking to change the demographic balance and ethnic mosaic of the region, the Turkish Government has already relocated dozens of Arab and Turkoman families from areas under its control in north-eastern Syria to areas of Nagorno-Karabakh that the Armenians of Artsakh were forced to abandon.

According to the aforementioned sources, at least two offices have been set up for this purpose in the city of Afrin, Syria. One of them is located on the former premises of the People’s Credit Bank, while the second is located in a new neighbourhood. Both locations are known for the active presence of Turkish intelligence operatives.

The reports indicate that these offices are registering Turkoman families in preparation for their transfer to occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh. The whole process

is being co-ordinated by the Turkish intelligence service, the Grey Wolves terrorist gang and their affiliated groups, such as the Sultan Murad, Suleyman Shah and Al-Hamza brigades. It should be recalled here that all these groups were sending terrorist and jihadist fighters to fight alongside the Azerbaijani armed forces during the war.

The Turkish authorities, with the tacit consent of Azerbaijan, are taking active steps to change the demographic composition of the Nagorno-Karabakh region by resettling affiliated foreign terrorist fighters and their families in the South Caucasus. We are also concerned that the current Turkish leadership will set up terrorist camps in the territories seized by Azerbaijan, which they will then use as a tool for projecting Turkish power in the region and instigating instability when it suits their purposes.

Our delegation has repeatedly stated that the presence of foreign terrorist fighters and jihadists in the region should be a cause of concern not only for Armenia but for all countries in the region and beyond.

The aforementioned actions are a continuation of the pan-Turkic aspirations of the Turkish leadership and embody their pipe dream of reviving the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's aggressive policy today remains the main obstacle to restoring peace, stability and security in the South Caucasus and the wider region. Moreover, we have before us the example of Syria, where Turkey's invasion has led to devastation, poverty, suffering and despair, turning the region into a haven for terrorists and jihadists.

Mr. Chairperson,

In view of the direct participation of Turkey in Azerbaijan's aggression against Artsakh and Armenia, and given also the transfer of Turkish-backed foreign terrorist fighters and jihadists to the South Caucasus, the participation of Turkey in any form whatsoever in the processes related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – especially with regard to ensuring the security of the people of Artsakh – is unacceptable to Armenia. Turkey, under its current leadership with their irredentist claims and illusions of reviving the Ottoman Empire, poses a threat to the stability of the region in both the short and the long term. Most immediately, Turkey's actions threaten to undermine the fragile ceasefire that is being maintained by the presence of Russian peacekeepers on the ground.

The animosity openly and frequently displayed by the current Turkish leadership towards the Armenian people is aggravating the security concerns of Armenia, Artsakh and the Armenian people around the world – concerns that are rooted in the Armenian Genocide.

Armenia has been a staunch advocate of reconciliation between the Armenian and Turkish peoples. Moreover, we have always admired the courage of those Turks who saved Armenian lives during the Genocide. However, the current Turkish leadership has rejected the possibility of reconciliation.

Turkey, therefore, cannot and should not play any role whatsoever in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, since through its hostile actions it is impeding further progress in the settlement process. We regret the stance taken by the current Turkish leadership, which have had the opportunity to play a genuinely constructive and responsible

role in the region by helping to create an environment conducive to peace and prosperity for all peoples of the region without distinction. Instead, the Turkish leadership has chosen the path of denialism, confrontation and intimidation, further stoking tensions and conflicts in the South Caucasus and beyond.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, I should like to stress once again that the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group continue to remain the only internationally agreed format for resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and that they enjoy the support of Armenia. All issues related to the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process and the final resolution of the conflict, including the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, must be discussed within this format.



1291st Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1291, Agenda item 4(e)

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF AZERBAIJAN

Mr. Chairperson,

We took note of the statement made by the delegation of the United States. We have not heard anything new in terms of substance in this statement. We are also aware that the Co-Chairs held yesterday another briefing for the OSCE Minsk Group. The rationale and timing behind this agenda item raises some questions, given that the Co-Chairs themselves appeared at the Permanent Council last week and had an opportunity to provide a detailed briefing to the Council.

On other occasion we would have welcomed active engagement from the co-chairing countries. Over the past three decades Azerbaijan has consistently stated that it is the most interested party in finding a soonest, durable solution to the conflict. We have been emphatically calling the Minsk Group to actively engage in the conflict resolution to change the status quo that the Co-Chairs themselves were calling dangerous and unsustainable. We had been calling for the OSCE to restore its ownership of the process by reinvigorating the work of the Minsk Group as a whole, which remained dormant, if not paralyzed, to a large extent, due to attempts of the Co-Chairs to monopolize the negotiation process.

All our attempts fell on deaf ears. We have not seen such enthusiasm from the co-chairing countries in pushing for tangible results in the negotiations. Nor did we see an adequate reaction to the statements and actions of the Armenian officials that pursued the obvious goal of derailing the peace process and consolidating the status quo of occupation created through the unlawful use of force and imposing a fait accompli.

It is apparent that the Co-Chairs are in search for a role in new situation. The absolute priority for them and, generally, for the OSCE should be to extend support to swift implementation in good faith of the trilateral agreement of 9 November. In accordance with the above-mentioned agreement, to date Armenia withdrew its armed forces from the Aghdam district of Azerbaijan on 20 November and from the Kalbajar district on 25 November 2020. Withdrawal of Armenia's armed forces from all the territories of Azerbaijan is imperative to make the ceasefire sustainable. In parallel with the withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from these territories the Azerbaijani armed forces are deployed to the international border between Azerbaijan and Armenia and along the contact line with the Russian peacekeepers in the northern part of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

After the withdrawal of Armenia's troops from the territories of Azerbaijan it will be possible to launch the next phase of implementation of the trilateral agreement, focusing on removing obstacles to all economic and transport links in the region, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the conflict-affected territories, which will allow for the return of the displaced population to their homes in safety and in dignity.

In the post-conflict phase sustaining peace, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, providing humanitarian assistance to those in need, including to returning internally displaced persons and refugees will be a priority for the Government of Azerbaijan.

Any future role of the OSCE and its participating States in sustaining peace depends on the support to the implementation of this agreement in its entirety as well as their respective contribution to building a just and durable peace in the region. In this regard, re-introduction of certain obsolete concepts based on political speculations or polarization of the humanitarian issues will be counterproductive.

And finally, our delegation sees no point in responding to the continuing allegations of the Armenian delegation to the OSCE, which apparently lost sense of reality. Otherwise, this delegation would have abandoned its obsolete conflict narrative full of falsifications, distortions and misinterpretations, and follow their Prime Minister in accepting and reconciling with new realities on the ground and implementing obligations under the 9 November agreement, which is imperative for a sustainable ceasefire and peace. Speaking of the misinformation of campaign continued by the Armenian Ambassador to the OSCE, we would like to reiterate the statement by Movses Akopyan who until recently was Chief Military Inspector of the armed forces of Armenia, in which he admitted that Armenia had been intentionally spreading lies which constituted 100 per cent of information communicated by Armenian leadership to its people in the course of 44 days of war. As for the role of Turkey, I have a surprise for the Armenian Ambassador. Turkey is a guarantor of the trilateral agreement and will participate together with Russia in monitoring the compliance of the sides with their obligation under the trilateral agreement. And Prime Minister Pashinyan has accepted the role of Turkey under this agreement. Thus, you better check your notes with the capital.

As for the remarks of the United States Ambassador on budget issues and three principles for the resolution of the conflict, we can continue these discussions for the next 30 years, yet they would be torn from reality on the ground. If the OSCE wishes to stay relevant and applicable, it should adapt to and embrace the new reality established by Azerbaijan. For that purpose, we should adjust the role of the Minsk Group in accordance with its mandate, as well as ensure the impartiality of its Co-Chairs. Thus, we invite the Co-Chairs, the United States of America, the European Union and countries that align with it, and other OSCE participating States to reconsider their positions and adjust to this new reality.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.



1291st Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1291, Agenda item 4(f)

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF AZERBAIJAN

Mr. Chairperson,

On 25 November, the French Senate adopted a resolution, calling on the Government of France to recognize the so-called “Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh”, and “to make this recognition an instrument of negotiations for the establishment of lasting peace”. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan in its commentary made it clear that “adoption of a completely biased resolution by the Senate can only be considered as a provocation”.

The Senate’s motion proceeded against the background of a series of provocative steps and statements made by French authorities on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. I wish to specify some of the major concerns to the Council so that delegations can imagine the whole spectrum of challenges that Azerbaijan has been facing due to such “mediation activity of France”, which recently has been expanded to the European Union position and countries aligning to its statements in the OSCE.

French officials on various levels delivered remarks questioning the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, voicing accusations against our country lacking credible evidence, and backing the initiatives on the promotion of the illegal regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan at parliamentary and municipal levels. These actions are contrary to the norms and principles of international law, the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, legal and political obligations under bilateral and European Union documents as well as the mandate entrusted to France as a co-chairing country of the OSCE Minsk Group, which is based on resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) of the United Nations Security Council.

During the 44 days of the military campaign carried out by Azerbaijan in the occupied territories more than 1,000 articles and video news were disseminated by French media sources with predominant pro-Armenian and anti-Azerbaijani coverage. Attempts by the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Paris to reach out to the French public and private media resources mostly faced with unprecedented denial. Those few French journalists and agencies which dared to report on the war crimes committed by Armenia against Azerbaijani civilians in Ganja, Barda, Terter and other cities experienced unparalleled level of persecution and life threats. Their reports were withdrawn from the websites of the respective agencies and they were suggested not to report from Azerbaijan. As usual, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has taken a silent stance in this regard.

France consistently prevented our efforts to refer in the documents considered within various international formats to relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions as the basis for the settlement of the conflict. As one of the permanent members of the Security Council and powerful Member State of the European Union, France and its Co-Chair by all means hampered the attempts of Azerbaijan to introduce a language from United Nations Security Council resolutions reaffirming the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders as the basis for resolution of the conflict.

It is deplorable that the French Foreign Ministry in its statement of 7 November 2020 intentionally distorted the name of the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha, purposefully demonstrating its profound disrespect to the feelings of thousands of Azerbaijanis forcibly expelled from their homes back in 1992. The language used by the French authorities in fact supported the attempts of Armenia to change the geographic names of a part of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory, in clear violation of international law, the Constitution and the legislation of Azerbaijan and the principles and procedures for international standardization of geographical names established within the United Nations.

We deplore continuing attempts by France to politicize the issue of protection of cultural and religious heritage in Azerbaijan, as evidenced by the statements of the French officials and the resolution of the French Senate, calling for "preservation of Armenian cultural and religious heritage". The fate of cultural and religious monuments in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan should have been high on the agenda of the international community, including of the co-chairing countries and, in particular, France long before and not only after the occupied territories are being liberated from the Armenian occupation. However, France turned a blind eye on the destruction and desecration of monuments, churches, mosques, illegal archaeological excavations, theft, misappropriation of and illicit trafficking of other cultural property from the occupied territories prohibited under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Second Protocol. Out of 67 mosques and Islamic religious shrines existing before the Armenian aggression in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan 64 have been erased to the ground or significantly damaged. Whatever Christian religious or cultural place that had been misappropriated by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan has not changed its legitimate owner. Azerbaijan as a multicultural and multi-confessional society will continue safeguarding and protecting, without exception, all cultural and religious sites in its territory in line with its legislation as well as the relevant international instruments. However, we will not take tolerance lessons and mentoring tone from countries, especially those, which not only failed to address deeply rooted Islamophobia in its society, but on the contrary, continue discriminatory practices, *inter alia*, by ordering the closure of mosques, encouraging harassment of Islam and its values and pursuing an intimidation campaign against human rights organizations addressing discrimination of Muslim communities.

Emphasis by France on the need to ensure return of those displaced during recent weeks apparently disregard the hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons forcibly expelled from their lands for more than three decades are unacceptable.

What was referred to in the resolution of the French Senate as the so-called “Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh” is the unlawful regime established by Armenia in the occupied territory of Azerbaijan. It is ultimately nothing other than the product of aggression, racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing. The regime is under the direction and control of Armenia and is not recognized by the international community. It is important to note that the Security Council adopted its resolutions after the so-called declaration of “independence” by the unlawful regime set up in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, thus making it absolutely clear that it had no legal effect whatsoever. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in its landmark judgment of 16 June 2015 in the case of *Chiragov and others v. Armenia* reaffirmed that the separatist entity “is not recognized as a State under international law by any countries or international organisations...”.

The internationally wrongful acts committed by Armenia and its affiliates in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan constitute serious breaches of obligations arising from peremptory norms of general international law (*jus cogens*). These serious breaches call for the application of the special consequences resulting from aggravated responsibility, namely: (a) the non-recognition of the situation created by such breaches; (b) the prohibition of aid or assistance in maintaining that situation; and (c) the exclusion of any immunity for the authors of these breaches. Another consequence of this aggravated responsibility is that all States are required to invoke the responsibility of Armenia and to take measures against it, including by means of sanctions, as well as criminal prosecutions and civil proceedings. Any activity considered as contributing to the maintenance of the illegal situation would entail the responsibility of the State either as the wrongdoer or for aiding or assisting the author of the wrongful act with the consequences and obligations flowing from any intentional act.

The actions of France undermine its role as responsible and credible mediator, and, in fact, is a negation of many things that the mediation stands for. The mandate of the co-chairing country of the OSCE Minsk Group as well as international law obliges France to strictly adhere to the principles of neutrality, impartiality, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity envisaged in relevant international documents regulating international mediation activities. Despite such clear obligations of France, its officials continue to publicly accuse Azerbaijan based on groundless allegations.

It should be stressed that the resolution of the French Senate was adopted after Azerbaijan and Armenia with the mediation of Russia signed a trilateral agreement. The French Foreign Ministry has seen the draft resolution and could have interfered and stopped it or altered the text in line with its commitments of the mediator. Apparently the French Foreign Ministry chose to give a chance to resolution to derail the trilateral agreement. Allowing such a shameful resolution to pass helped to create false expectations among the Armenian diaspora of France and encourage Armenia to restore its territorial claims to Azerbaijan. Although, it was clear that future of Armenia and the Armenian population of the Qarabag region of Azerbaijan depends not on the French Senate, but on the readiness of Armenia to normalize its relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey.

In closing, I would like to inform the Permanent Council that on the 26 November the Milli Majlis (Parliament) of Azerbaijan adopted a motion calling the Government of Azerbaijan to consider the withdrawal of France from the position of the Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group. The decision by the Parliament of Azerbaijan sends clear message to

the OSCE, members of the Minsk Group and its co-chairing countries to accept the new reality on the ground established as a result of the agreement arrived to by both sides of the conflict and endorsed by Russia and Turkey. Embracing new realities would allow the OSCE and its Minsk Group to define its role in the post-conflict phase. We strongly urge France and the European Union delegations to the OSCE and concerned countries to abandon their attempts to impose old narratives and non-consensual proposals on the sides, to respect the OSCE commitments on the resolution of the conflict on the basis of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and their bilateral legal basis agreed with Azerbaijan as well as to extent support to the implementation of the trilateral agreement in its entirety. The delegation of Azerbaijan encourages the Council to support our efforts on bringing the OSCE Minsk Group and its Co-Chair activities in line with the mandate entrusted by all 57 participating States.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.