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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**in response to the address of Peter Lord Bowness, President of the OSCE PA,
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan at the 1299th meeting of the
OSCE Permanent Council**

21 January 2021

Madame Chairperson,

First of all, let me convey our congratulations to President Peter Lord Bowness for taking over the presidency of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and wish him every success in this responsible office.

We also thank Lord Bowness for sharing with us his vision of the role of the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly in building comprehensive security and co-operation in the OSCE area.

Armenia highly values the role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as a forum for dialogue among elected representatives of the peoples of the OSCE participating States, which is called to complement and strengthen the implementation of the commitments assumed by those States. We believe that strong adherence to all OSCE principles and commitments, without a selective approach, would create a conducive environment for genuine co-operation, and parliamentarians can/should lead us by their example through the adoption of commitments fully in line with the letter and spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. In this context, we are deeply convinced that, in their activities, parliamentarians should proceed from the need to respect and implement the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, without any exception. An inclusive approach is essential in any sensitive and complex environment. Initiatives to apply parliamentary diplomacy tools, including organizing discussions with parties to conflict, can be valuable, but only if they are inclusive and involve elected representatives of all peoples, regardless of the status of the territory they belong to.

Madame Chairperson,

On 27 September 2020, in flagrant violation of international law and principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely the principles of refraining from the threat or use of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, not to mention the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as ceasefire agreements of 1994-95, Azerbaijan launched a well-prepared and planned aggression against the people of Artsakh, which has led to the most serious crisis in the region since the 1990s. In what has become the biggest military escalation in times of a global pandemic, Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters, carried out indiscriminate attacks on peaceful cities, civilian population and critical infrastructure of Artsakh, which resulted in numerous casualties and destruction. The international community has witnessed the confirmed facts of recruitment, transfer and deployment of foreign terrorist fighters, the use of cluster and chemical munitions, deliberate targeting of civilian population, including women and children, journalists, humanitarian and medical workers, torture and murder of hostages and prisoners of war, mutilation of dead bodies, destruction and desecration of religious and cultural heritage and other atrocities carried out by the Azerbaijani military. Moreover, some of these crimes are still continuing.

In this context, we appreciate the statements made by the OSCE PA President on 27 September, 6 October, 10 November 2020, in which he condemned the military actions in Nagorno-Karabakh, called for a cessation of hostilities in the interests of civilians living in the area and urged the sides to recommit to negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs towards a peaceful, long-term and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. However, words are not sufficient, if not followed by deeds. We are confident that the OSCE PA could have done more, first and foremost through promoting in a more robust manner the common principles and values, in order to achieve implementation of the commitments made by participating States.

Furthermore, the OSCE PA has adopted a vast number of resolutions related to countering terrorism, and we would like to hear your views and thoughts on what steps the Parliamentary Assembly should take to ensure implementation by such participating States as Azerbaijan and Turkey of their commitments in countering terrorism, especially in light of the recent developments in the NK conflict area, where these two countries actively engaged terrorists and used them to achieve their political goals.

We also recall that in his statement of 10 November, the OSCE PA President called to proceed without delay with the exchange of prisoners of war, detainees, and the bodies of fallen combatants. Unfortunately, more than two months after the ceasefire, this purely humanitarian issue remains unresolved, primarily due to Azerbaijan's position and actions, creating obstacles for the exchange of prisoners of war and other

detainees. We should explore all possible options, avenues and means to speed up the return of all PoWs, civilian hostages and other detainees, who are in Azerbaijan's captivity to their homes. In this context, I believe that the diverse toolbox of the Parliamentary Assembly has not yet been used. So, I would like to inquire how the OSCE PA and, in particular, the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, can contribute to resolving this important issue as soon as possible.

In conclusion, let me once again reiterate Armenia's continuing commitment to dialogue and co-operation within the OSCE's parliamentary dimension and wish you, Mr. President, every success during your tenure.

I thank you.