
Chairmanship: Sweden**1303rd PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

1. Date: Thursday, 18 February 2021 (via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.

Closed: 1.25 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador U. Funered

Prior to taking up the agenda, the Chairperson reminded the Permanent Council of the technical modalities for the conduct of meetings of the Council during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Agenda item 1: **REPORT BY THE CHIEF OBSERVER OF THE OSCE
OBSERVER MISSION AT TWO RUSSIAN CHECKPOINTS
ON THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN BORDER**

Chairperson, Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Russian-Ukrainian border (PC.FR/2/21 OSCE+) (PC.FR/2/21/Add.1 OSCE+), Portugal-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, Moldova and San Marino, in alignment) (PC.DEL/243/21), Canada (PC.DEL/234/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/218/21), Turkey (PC.DEL/232/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Switzerland (PC.DEL/228/21 OSCE+), Ukraine (PC.DEL/226/21), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/223/21 OSCE+)

Agenda item 2: **REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES**

Chairperson

(a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea:* Ukraine (PC.DEL/225/21), Portugal-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/241/21), United Kingdom, Canada (PC.DEL/235/21 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/233/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/219/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/229/21 OSCE+)

- (b) *Situation in Ukraine and the need to implement the Minsk agreements:* Russian Federation (PC.DEL/221/21), Ukraine, Portugal-European Union, France (also on behalf of Germany) (PC.DEL/224/21 OSCE+)
- (c) *Aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and Armenia with the direct involvement of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters:* Armenia (Annex 1) (PC.DEL/231/21/Add.1)
- (d) *Continuing human rights concerns in Belarus:* United States of America (PC.DEL/220/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/227/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom (also on behalf of Canada), Portugal-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, in alignment) (PC.DEL/242/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/222/21 OSCE+)

Agenda item 3: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
 CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

- (a) *Visit of the Chairperson-in-Office to Georgia on 15 and 16 February 2021:* Chairperson
- (b) *First Preparatory Meeting for the 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum on “Promoting comprehensive security, stability and sustainable development in the OSCE area through women’s economic empowerment”, held via video teleconference on 15 and 16 February 2021:* Chairperson
- (c) *Meeting of the Human Dimension Committee, held via video teleconference on 16 February 2021:* Chairperson
- (d) *Address by the Chairperson-in-Office to the Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to be held via video teleconference from 24 to 26 February 2021:* Chairperson
- (e) *Meeting between the Chairperson-in-Office and the delegation of the Swedish Parliament to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on 11 February 2021:* Chairperson

Agenda item 4: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Update on the COVID-19 situation across the OSCE executive structures:* Secretary General (SEC.GAL/26/21 OSCE+)

- (b) *First Preparatory Meeting for the 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum on “Promoting comprehensive security, stability and sustainable development in the OSCE area through women’s economic empowerment”, held via video teleconference on 15 and 16 February 2021: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/26/21 OSCE+)*
- (c) *Distribution on 17 February 2021 of the OSCE Gender Parity Strategy Progress Report for the period July 2019 to November 2020 (SEC.GAL/25/21): Secretary General (SEC.GAL/26/21 OSCE+)*
- (d) *Issuance of vacancy notices on 5 February 2021 for the posts of Director of Administration and Finance (VNSMUP01161), Chief Medical Officer (VNSMUP01162), Head of Finance and Budget (VNSMUP01163), Head of General Services (VNSMUP01164), and Head of Human Resources Management (VNSMUP01165), all in the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine: Secretary General (SEC.GAL/26/21 OSCE+)*

Agenda item 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Declaration against the use of arbitrary detention in State-to-State relations: Canada (also on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) (PC.DEL/236/21 OSCE+)*
- (b) *Update on the implementation of humanitarian measures in line with the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020 signed by Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation: Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/230/21 OSCE+), Turkey (Annex 2), Russian Federation*
- (c) *Farewell to the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the OSCE, Ambassador E. Soysal: Chairperson, Turkey*

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 4 March 2021, at 10 a.m., via video teleconference



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1303
18 February 2021
Annex 1

Original: ENGLISH

1303rd Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1303, Agenda item 2(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

Madam Chairperson,

Since the last meeting of the Permanent Council, when I presented the situation concerning the Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages, there has been no positive development in this regard. The authorities of Azerbaijan, in violation of their international obligations and commitments, including those under international humanitarian law, continue to ignore the calls of the international community for them to release the Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages and stop using them for political leverage. I leave it to the discretion of the participating States to evaluate this kind of behaviour on the part of Azerbaijan.

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,

As part of an all-for-all exchange, Armenia handed over all Azerbaijani prisoners, including the two men convicted of murder in 2014 at a duly held court trial in Artsakh. Recently, the Armenian side has also returned two Azerbaijani servicemen detained for illegally crossing the State border of Armenia.

In the light of this, the continuing non-compliance of Azerbaijan with the provisions of international humanitarian law – and of the 9 November ceasefire statement, which provides, *inter alia*, for the exchange of prisoners of war, hostages and other detained persons – is emblematic. Moreover, as previously mentioned by this delegation, Azerbaijan continues to conceal the exact number of the prisoners of war and civilians and refuses to provide a list of prisoners and civilian hostages to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is another violation of its international obligations. Meanwhile, it is known that there are also women among the dozens of prisoners of war and civilian captives. One of them is Ms. Maral Najarian, a Lebanese Armenian, mother of two, who fled Lebanon after the devastating explosion in the seaport of Beirut and lived in Artsakh before the start of the war. She and her husband went back to Artsakh after the cessation of hostilities to collect their belongings and have gone missing since then. It took more than a month after her disappearance for Azerbaijan to confirm to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that she was in their custody.

In their efforts to justify the unlawful and inhumane detention of Maral Najarian, the Azerbaijani authorities began to falsify the facts and misrepresent her as a “sniper”, as attested by numerous postings in the Azerbaijani segment of social media. Regardless of any claims by the Azerbaijani authorities, this is a clear case of hostage-taking and enforced disappearance, as defined by the case-law of the ECHR.

Madam Chairperson,

Azerbaijan’s penitentiary system has long been known for torture and for the cruel and inhuman treatment of detainees, as has been confirmed in several international reports, including the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention Statement upon the conclusion of its mission to Azerbaijan in May 2016 and the Committee Against Torture’s concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Azerbaijan, likewise from 2016.

Needless to say, given the terrifying atmosphere of anti-Armenian hatred and impunity for crimes committed against Armenians, the Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages in Azerbaijani prisons face imminent and serious threats to their lives and health.

We have presented ample evidence of the cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment of Armenians in Azerbaijani custody, including cases of extrajudicial executions and beheadings. The recent case of Mr. Arsen Gharakhanian, a father of four, who was found shot dead on 18 January in Nagorno-Karabakh’s Hadrut district occupied by the Azerbaijani forces, is indicative. As you may recall, he was considered a prisoner of war on the basis of a video posted on social media on 7 January. On this evidence, Armenia lodged an application before the European Court of Human Rights requesting an “interim measure” in order to obtain information about Mr. Gharakhanian’s whereabouts and guarantee his safety. Instead, his slain body was repatriated.

You may also recall that while President Ilham Aliyev confirmed that there were Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan, he also claimed that “they cannot be considered prisoners of war because the war is over. They are terrorists and saboteurs.” This is an absolute and flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, which unambiguously guarantees the rights of all prisoners of war and stipulates that all prisoners of war must be released from custody and return home immediately after the cessation of hostilities.

All this prompts my delegation to once again urge you, Madam Chairperson, and the OSCE participating States to put pressure on Azerbaijan to release all prisoners of war and civilian captives immediately and without any preconditions.

Madam Chairperson,

The continuing anti-Armenian hate rhetoric and the use of derogatory language and hate speech against Armenians in public discourse in Azerbaijan, including by high-ranking officials, is another matter of serious concern and should be addressed properly by the relevant institutions and structures of the OSCE.

The language of ethnic superiority and dehumanization of the Armenian people is not a new phenomenon, but in the context of the current situation in the region it is extremely unacceptable and deplorable.

When the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia addressed malicious practices of this kind, he was subjected to intimidation and attacks, extremely insulting remarks, threats and hate speech disseminated in the Azerbaijani media, by members of the Azerbaijani parliament among others.

In another shocking move, Azerbaijan has issued a postage stamp depicting a person standing on the map in medical protective clothing and “disinfecting” the recently occupied territories of Artsakh from viruses, which, no doubt, is a clear reference to the ethnic cleansing of the territory from the Armenians. You can see the image of this stamp on your screens.

This outrageous postage stamp is reminiscent of the Nazi racial propaganda which equated Jews with insects. This shocking and deplorable act once again testifies to the true intentions of the Azerbaijani authorities, namely, to subject the Armenian people of Artsakh to ethnic cleansing and erase the traces of their existence in their homeland. Moreover, it proves that the Azerbaijanis’ statements about their desire to live in peace and harmony and to bridge the dividing lines in the region for the prosperity of all are just a propaganda trick designed to mislead the international community and portray Azerbaijan as part of the solution and not the problem itself, which is what it really is.

Madam Chairperson,

The desperate efforts of Azerbaijan to disseminate false and fabricated information about the humanitarian situation in the recently occupied territories of Artsakh, and its attempts to engage various international organizations and structures, including those of the OSCE, are nothing but calculated steps to legitimize the results of its aggression and the use of force against the people of Artsakh, which were accompanied by numerous war crimes and gross violations of international humanitarian law. At the same time, Azerbaijan, under false and politicized pretexts, is denying access to Artsakh to the international humanitarian organizations which should be going there to assess the situation on the ground and help those in need.

The humanitarian situation in which the people of Artsakh have found themselves as a result of the Azerbaijani aggression is dire and needs to be addressed. However, the most pressing humanitarian issue today, which should be resolved unconditionally and immediately, is the issue of the release and return of all prisoners of war and civilian captives held by Azerbaijan. Until then, any talk of implementation of the humanitarian aspects of the 9 November statement is utterly cynical.

Madam Chairperson,

The current situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is the result of the flagrant violation by Azerbaijan of several core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely, refraining from the threat or use of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, and equal rights and self-determination of peoples, not to mention respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. There should

be no illusion that the results of the use of force, accompanied as it was by war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, can ever become the basis for a negotiation process aimed at reaching a lasting and sustainable peace. Lasting and durable peace in the region can only be achieved through a comprehensive resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which must include the determination of the status of Artsakh based on the realization by the people of Artsakh of their right to self-determination, the ensuring of the safe and dignified return of the recently displaced population to their homes, and the preservation of the cultural and religious heritage of the region.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1303
18 February 2021
Annex 2

Original: ENGLISH

1303rd Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1303, Agenda item 5(b)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

We thank our distinguished Azerbaijani colleague for providing an important update to the Permanent Council on the implementation of various humanitarian measures by Azerbaijan.

The statement by the President of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation on 10 November was an important step.

In this context, the Azerbaijani armed forces continue to clear mines and improvised explosive devices in areas liberated from occupation.

To support the Azerbaijani army in its efforts to clear mines and improvised explosive devices, personnel of the Turkish Land Forces Command were sent to Azerbaijan. These Turkish staff also provide trainings in clearing mines and improvised explosive devices in Azerbaijan. Besides, in January, the Turkish Engineering School and Training Centre Command in Izmir provided a training in this regard to 23 Azerbaijani personnel.

We join Azerbaijan's call that the OSCE and its participating States support the two trilateral statements.

Madam Chairperson,

As we have stated on a number of occasions also here in the Permanent Council, Turkey believes that the way for sustainable peace and stability can be paved together. New opportunities will arise and the whole region will benefit from this process. We sincerely believe that the Armenian people will ultimately also be winners in the peace.

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

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.