

Delegation of Germany

**STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY AT THE 1049th MEETING  
OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 April 2015

In recent days, Germany too has been remembering in various ways the tragic events which led to the extermination of large sections of the Armenian people a century ago and the start of which was marked for the 100th time on 24 April 2015. To coincide with this occasion, Federal President Joachim Gauck gave a moving speech on 23 April in which he remembered the hundreds of thousands of victims. This attracted much attention and placed the events in a specific historical context that is still relevant today. In this spirit, a proposal for a resolution was also discussed in the German Bundestag. In this way, both the Federal President and the Bundestag, just like Federal Minister Steinmeier, place the anniversary of the events of 1915 in a context that still affects us all today.

For us here in Vienna it cannot just be a matter of taking time to stop and remember. Instead we have to think about what this remembrance means for us, for the OSCE. In doing so, we must make sure that our discussions are not reduced to differences regarding a single term. Nor can it be a question of establishing a tribunal or putting someone in the dock. Instead we should concentrate on our responsibility today and on the conclusions to be drawn for our work.

Let me add just a few brief thoughts in this respect.

The OSCE aims to shape a new age of democracy, peace and freedom. Confrontation, war and violence are to be consigned to the past once and for all. We want to create security with one another and not from one another and develop and promote friendly relations among the OSCE participating States to that end. This is the mission of the Charter of Paris, to which we have all committed ourselves. If we are to fulfil this mission, we cannot mask or ignore history, especially when it appears to stand in the way of our achieving our objective. This is true for the expulsion and extermination of the Armenians in 1915 just as for the currently unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area, the causes of which are often rooted in history. A culture of remembrance and serious dialogue about what divides us are prerequisites for developing good-neighbourly coexistence.

I believe the commemoration today underscores the key importance especially of the human dimension in our work. Security begins with respect for the dignity and the basic rights and freedoms of the individual. Tolerance towards minorities and non-discrimination are central to our security – this was a central lesson of the twentieth century. This knowledge led not least of all to the creation of the post of High Commissioner on National Minorities,

which was established as early as 1992 at the Helsinki Summit. The Ukraine conflict also provides evidence of the validity of this knowledge even today.

Lastly, every OSCE participating State must take responsibility for its history. It must endeavour to overcome the current speechlessness and seek ways of reconciliation. The OSCE presents itself as a model security organization, whose core task it is to solve problems through dialogue and co-operation and to ensure lasting peace and security. To that end, it is vital that the participating States are willing to come to terms with their history and approach one another. Germany dealt with the “inglorious” role of the German Reich, not least by opening its archives. Finally, the Federal Government encourages Turkey and Armenia to begin entering into the dialogue of historians as specified in the as yet unratified “Zurich Protocol” of 2009.

Let me recall Federal President Gauck’s closing words, which embody the quintessence of what the OSCE is all about: “Only together can we overcome what has divided us and continues to divide us. Only together do we have a good future in this one world that is entrusted to us all together.”