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PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**in response to the Address of H.E. Mr. Ian Borg, OSCE Chairman-in-Office,
Minister for Foreign Trade and European Affairs of Malta,
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1457th Special Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

25 January 2024

Madam Chairperson,

The Delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign, Trade and European Affairs of Malta, H.E. Dr. Ian Borg and thanks him for outlining the priorities of the Maltese Chairpersonship.

At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Malta for its readiness to take enormous responsibility for leading our Organization against the backdrop of the current security challenges. We are pleased to note that Malta will act in a principled manner, within its mandate, in order to defend and uphold the OSCE's core principles and commitments. In this regard, Armenia will support all the efforts of the Maltese Chairmanship.

Distinguished Minister,

We see that in leading our Organization your approaches have been crystallised into concrete priorities, namely supporting the resolution of ongoing conflicts, upholding the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act and placing human rights and the security of the people at the core of your endeavors. Therefore, we are pleased to engage in this dialogue.

However, before referring to each of them, let me underline that these priorities are strongly interlinked, intertwined and interdependent. It is impossible to maintain peace and security and provide a safer future without taking into account the plight of people affected by conflicts. Conflicts are not merely about principles or diverging views on their application but first and foremost, they are about people: their needs, choices and will.

The 120,000 people of Nagorno-Karabakh, whose sole aspiration was to live and create in peace and dignity in their ancestral homeland and who have already been suffering under

the more than 9-month illegal blockade and siege, were subjected to yet another large-scale military offensive by Azerbaijan on September 19, 2023, which resulted in mass forced displacement of the indigenous population. At this point in time, we can state that in the annals of history, the year 2023 will remain a testament to the OSCE's ultimate failure to prevent ethnic cleansing in its area of responsibility. Today, the OSCE, the world's largest regional security organization, does not meet the requirements set up by the Helsinki Final Act. During recent years, it has failed to prevent the war, undertake early actions, or respond to the war and use of force by Azerbaijan. As a result, we are faced with the occupation of more than 200 sq. km of the sovereign territory of Armenia, an ongoing economic blockade, ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, and last but not least, new territorial claims and the threat or use of force from the official Baku towards my country.

Today Azerbaijan is hindering the peace process based on the well-known principles that have been previously agreed upon between the parties and is backtracking on its commitments. I have to say with regret that the recent pronouncements made by the President of Azerbaijan during the January 10, 2024, interview contradict the entire logic of the negotiations. Furthermore, among others, the President of Azerbaijan revealed that for the past three decades, Azerbaijan has taken advantage of the negotiations facilitated by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group not with the intention of attaining peace, but rather to manipulate the international community for the purpose of alleviating pressure, advancing its militaristic agenda and preparing for war. Regrettably, the same logic prevails also today.

Distinguished Minister,

Our region, the South Caucasus, requires peace and Armenia stands ready to genuinely contribute to that process. There are a number of humanitarian issues that should be addressed, including the fate of the Armenian missing persons, cases of forced disappearances, the unconditional release of all Armenian prisoners of war and other civilian detainees, and the protection of Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia is determined to normalise relations with Azerbaijan and establish an enduring peace in the region, notwithstanding Azerbaijan's obstructionism. In order to achieve long lasting peace, however, unambiguous mutual recognition of territorial integrity on the basis of the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991, delineation of the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan using the most recent legitimate maps (USSR General Staff of 1974-1978), and the withdrawal of Azerbaijani armed forces from Armenia's sovereign territory are indispensable.

Armenia is steadfast in its commitment to peace and normalisation of relations with Azerbaijan based on these principles and we are confident that our region can turn into a "Crossroad of Peace" that will bring economic benefits not only to our immediate neighbourhood but also beyond.

To bring long-lasting peace to the South Caucasus requires the genuine engagement of Azerbaijan, and Armenia needs the strong support of international actors in its efforts.

Your Excellency, distinguished Minister,

Despite the fact that the current security environment in the South Caucasus remains extremely challenging, we still believe that the OSCE will reinstate its primary role based on the Helsinki Decalogue. In this regard, Malta's commitment to work on safeguarding and upholding the fundamental principles and commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, as well as respecting OSCE's decisions and long-standing practices, is crucial for building trust, security and peace from Valletta to Reykjavik and from Vancouver to Vladivostok. At the same time any action that will legitimize the result of the use of force will be unacceptable for Armenia.

In closing, let me wish every success to you, honorable Minister, and your able team here in Vienna, led by our distinguished colleague Ambassador Natasha Meli Daudey.

Thank you.