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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT

**on the Joint Turkish-Azerbaijani Large-Scale Military Exercise
as delivered by the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia at the 966th Plenary
Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation
27 January 2021**

Madam Chairperson,

On 17 January the Ministry of Defense of Turkey announced through its official website about conducting the «Winter-2021» joint Turkish-Azerbaijani military exercise in Kars from 1 to 12 February. This was followed by information disseminated by the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan on the departure of the military personnel and equipment of the Nakhijevan Combined Army of Azerbaijan to Turkey to take part in the joint military exercise.

According to the Turkish media reports, the planned exercise is expected to be one of the largest winter military drills of recent times aimed, among others, at improving cooperation and coordination during joint military operations and testing combat capabilities under extreme weather conditions. Reportedly, the military exercise will involve tank divisions, heavy artillery, sniper teams, helicopters and special forces.

At the previous meeting of the FSC we drew the attention of the participating States to this exercise. In response to our inquiry Turkish delegation here in Vienna insisted that the exercise was not notified under the Vienna Document because of the small number of the military personnel and equipment to be engaged in it. We were further informed that Turkey “in good faith” provides information about the military exercises through official sources. Whereas, as I have already said, the official announcement mentioned only the dates when the drills will be conducted.

Madam Chairperson,

We would also like to draw the attention of the Forum to the highly provocative and hostile messages towards Armenia contained in the official information provided by the Ministry of Defense of Turkey, in particular references to the so-called “great victory over the

Armenian army in Karabakh” and assurances to work with Azerbaijan as “one heart and one fist”.

Armenian Delegation in its statements during the FSC and PC meetings last week already raised concerns about the drills stressing that conducting military exercise with an obvious offensive intent 50 kilometers from Armenian state border by two participating States of the OSCE that a few months ago openly and bluntly waged a war against Artsakh and Armenia speaks for itself. Since the military exercise will be hosted by Turkey, we once again call on Turkey for the sake of transparency to provide detailed information on the parameters of the military exercise.

Once again we call on Turkey and Azerbaijan to refrain from any action which will deepen mistrust and animosity and further diminish the prospect of peace and stability of the region. Furthermore, we call on the participating States to react to such provocative behaviour of Turkey and Azerbaijan, inter alia to pressure these two countries, including through bilateral and multilateral arrangements, to act responsibly, abandon jingoistic policy and honour their commitments in building trust, confidence and good neighbourly relations.

I kindly ask this statement to be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.

Right of Reply

Madam Chairperson,

The delegations of Turkey and Azerbaijan continue to insist that, and I quote from the official announcement by Turkish side, “the largest military exercise of recent times”, end of quote, is not notifiable under the Vienna Document, while at the same time, surprisingly, it notifies another military exercise with an involvement of up to 400 personnel to be held in May this year. The mere fact that Turkey opted for a smaller exercise to be notified in its annual calendar while leaving the larger one unnotified comes to confirm our concerns.

Once again we insist that conducting an unnotified large-scale military exercise just 50 km away from the Armenian border with an obvious offensive intent immediately after 44 days of violent war definitely does not fit into the declared intentions of establishing good-neighbourly relations and promoting security and stability in our region. What we have witnessed so far is provocative actions clumsily covered by the pronouncements of good intentions.

Being a member of the international community above all entails responsible and mature behaviour which will be beneficial for the people of the region. Thus, we call, once again, on Turkey and Azerbaijan to refrain from aggressive and destabilizing actions which

threaten the extremely fragile situation in our region. Furthermore, we call on the OSCE participating States to join our efforts towards building necessary conditions for a lasting and sustainable peace in the region.

Thank you.