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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

**Statement**  
**In response to the address by the**  
**Secretary General of the Council of Europe**  
**as delivered by the Delegation of Armenia**  
**at the 1295<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

*10 December 2020*

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation warmly welcomes the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Madam Pejčinović Burić, back to the Permanent Council and would like to thank for her remarks.

Madame Secretary General,

The dire humanitarian situation resulting from the war unleashed by Azerbaijan and its allies, as well as from the transfer and deployment of foreign terrorist fighters in the region, enormously aggravated the issues related to human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of Artsakh and the region.

The violent war, the barbaric treatment of the prisoners of war and civilian hostages, extermination and appropriation of the rich Armenian cultural heritage are proving that Nagorno Karabakh was not and is not a territorial dispute but first and foremost a struggle for existence and freedom. I hope that today, in the aftermath of the war this has become more than obvious.

Armenia repeatedly advocated the universality of human rights and their protection, especially when it comes to the people residing in conflict areas. Armenia has always advocated the status-neutral approach in the context of human rights protection, with the understanding that the human rights of the people should be considered as a primary goal which should be ensured regardless of the political or legal status of the territory they reside in. In this context we welcome that you, Madame Secretary General, declared addressing this problem a priority for your mandate.

Madame Secretary General,

A month after cessation of hostilities, the situation with prisoners of war and other captives, including civilians, remains extremely worrisome with an urgent need to ensure the well-being of the hostages and prisoners of war held by Azerbaijan. Horrific video footages are continuously being posted on social media, showing inhuman and degrading treatment, including executions, beheadings, mutilation of bodies.

All such cases have been duly registered and presented to relevant international bodies, including the ECtHR. And the Court has already decided to apply interim measures against Azerbaijan in cases of at least nine prisoners of war. The European Court of Human Rights, through its system of interim measures, continues to remain an extremely important instrument in enforcing the protection of human rights enshrined in the Convention, in this case the right to life and prohibition of torture.

In this context let me draw your attention to the recently adopted Ministerial Council decision on the Prevention and Eradication of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which can be a basis for further promoting the cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe in the area of the prevention of torture.

Another pressing issue relates to human rights of the recently displaced population. Despite the return of several thousands of civilians to their homes, mostly to Artsakh capital Stepanakert, tens of thousands remain displaced, their property either damaged, destroyed, or left under Azerbaijani occupation.

Madame Secretary General,

The Council of Europe, with its mandate and an extensive body of legally binding conventions and treaties, is almost uniquely placed to address the suppression of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Artsakh as a consequence of war. We believe that all respective monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe, such as the Commissioner for Human Rights, the CPT-the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the ECRI - the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and other monitoring bodies should have free and unhindered access to the region, to carry out their mandated work. It is unfortunate, that due to the obstruction of Azerbaijan in the past such mandated activities never materialised. But the situation the people of Artsakh live in now has changed. And this is not about politics, this is about human lives and all political speculations should be rejected.

Mr Chairman,

Armenia has always advocated stronger collaboration between the Council of Europe and the OSCE through complimenting and creating synergies. We highlight the

importance of the continued cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe in all four priority areas. However, we underline that our cooperation in the fight against terrorism should be reassessed and adjusted, given the new realities in the OSCE and Council of Europe area.

Armenia strongly denounces and rejects all forms of terrorism, including its organisation, instigation and assistance, including through recruitment, transfer or deployment. Subsequently, complicity on the part of any state in abetting terrorism should not be tolerated and the countries that are implicated in this, should face consequences.

In conclusion, Madame Secretary General, let me reiterate Armenia's full support to further advancing and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.

I thank you.