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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

By Ambassador Armen Papikyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia in response to H.E. Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

as delivered at the 1276th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

July 23, 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes H.E. Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and thanks him for presenting the priorities of the Greek Chairmanship.

Mr. Minister,

We should admit that the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe comes at an extremely challenging time, when the very basics of effective protection of our common and shared values fundamental rights and freedoms are being undermined. Conflicts with potential to flare up at any moment, upsurge of revanchism, violent nationalism and extremism, incitement of hatred, as well as incitement to hostility and violence on national, racial, ethnic and religious basis advocated by political leaders of certain states , are extremely dangerous developments that we are facing today. On top of all this, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly undermined the mechanisms of our collective resilience - including multilateralism. It is particularly alarming that we have been witnessing all of the above-mentioned manifestations in our common space of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. And unfortunately, this list is not exhaustive. In such circumstances, championing human rights, democracy and the rule of law is extremely difficult, but ultimately crucial.

We believe that the priority areas for action as outlined by the Greek Chairmanship at this juncture are very timely and pertinent. Against the backdrop of COVID-19 and in anticipation of its second wave, we fully share your approach to address the *“Protection of human life and public health in the context of a pandemic – Effectively responding to a sanitary crisis in full respect for human rights and the principles of democracy and the rule of law”*.

We also fully agree that measures introduced by states to contain the spread of the virus must be proportionate and legitimate. It is absolutely unacceptable for states to abuse the imperative of public health and safety by tightening restrictions on human rights and crackdown on opposition and political opponents.

Mr. Minister,

Our two organizations are based on the universal and shared system of values. At the same time, institutional cooperation between our two Organizations should be strengthened and enhanced on the basis of their comparative advantages. This discourse about streamlining and raising effectiveness of cooperation between two organizations is not something new, but I think it doesn't make this issue less pertinent.

The European Convention of Human Rights remains the most comprehensive and effective instrument for the promotion and protection of human rights on our continent and beyond. We must ensure that it equally and unconditionally guarantees the fundamental rights of all individuals, including those residing in conflict areas, without any limitation or whatever political considerations. This will be the best contribution of *your Chairmanship* in marking the 70th Anniversary of the European Convention of Human Rights.

It is our strong conviction that constant violation of basic and fundamental human rights, specifically the right of people to self-determination, is one of the underlying causes of conflicts that we have in the OSCE - CoE area. Therefore, people residing in conflict areas should not be deprived of the support of relevant international human rights bodies. In this regard, let me emphasize our principled position on the free and unhindered access of human rights mechanisms to conflict areas in a status neutral manner.

Mr. Minister,

We welcome your intention to focus on the rights of the younger generation. Undoubtedly, the new generation should be properly informed about their rights, duties and prospects of a democratic citizen. In the context of their educational rights, Armenia fully supports the importance that the Greek Chairmanship attributes to the study of history as an integral part of education. The establishment of an Observatory on History Teaching could become an indispensable asset to this end.

In conclusion, let me once again reiterate Armenia's support to Greece in fulfilling these important tasks and wish them every success in the months to come.

Thank you.