



London, April 13, 2005

Statement of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs

The Minsk-Group Co-Chairs, concerned by the growing tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan as a result of the significant increase, during recent weeks, of ceasefire violations along the front lines, resulting in higher numbers of casualties, as well as by public statements about the possibility of war, deem it appropriate to recall that:

- these violations are causing needless loss of life and jeopardizing the cease-fire;
- references to war are complicating current efforts to elaborate a peaceful settlement of the conflict, are fueling feelings of hate in the population of both countries, and are not preparing the people to live as neighbors rather than enemies.

At this sensitive juncture, where a first step towards an agreement mediated by the Co-Chairs could be at hand in the framework of the discussions between the parties, the Co-Chairs strongly urge them:

- according to the obligations undertaken by the sides in February 1995, to reinforce the cease-fire on the line of contact and refrain from any public statements that could lead to escalation of the conflict;
- to recognize that a renewal of hostilities cannot provide a lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict but would be disastrous for the population of both countries, resulting in loss of life, more destruction, additional refugees and displaced persons, and enormous financial costs that would undermine the economic development of both countries;
- to prepare their populations for a balanced negotiated agreement that will require compromise on both sides.

The Co-Chairs encourage the sides to focus their efforts on the ongoing discussions of the Foreign Ministers with the Co-Chairs during the meetings planned in London mid-April and in Frankfurt at the end of April, in preparation for the next meeting between the two Presidents envisaged in mid-May.

Ambassador Yuriy Merzlyakov
Co-Chair of the Russian
Federation

Ambassador Steven Mann
Co-Chair of the United
States of America

Ambassador Bernard Fassinier
Co-Chair of France