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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 752nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh

The European Union associates itself with the condemnation that has just been voiced by the Chairmanship and by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group. We deplore the armed incidents that have increased along the line of contact in recent weeks and have claimed victims on both sides. We also truly regret the shooting that led on 26 February to the cancellation of the ceasefire monitoring mission, which was operating in the region of Filouzi, even though written guarantees of security had been given to Ambassador Kasprzyk by the local military officials.

Madam Chairperson,

The European Union would like to mention once again the particular importance that it attaches to the continuation without hindrance of the ceasefire monitoring activities on the line of contact and along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which unquestionably contribute towards reducing tensions in the conflict zone and preventing a total deterioration of the situation. In this regard, the European Union calls on the parties to ensure that the OSCE observers have the security conditions they need to be able to implement their mandate.

The European Union renews its call for strict respect of the ceasefire and urges the parties to respect in good faith their commitments not to resort to violence, which they again recently reiterated to the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group during the visit that the Co-Chairmen have just made to the region. We regret on this occasion that the recommendations made at the Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group concerning the implementation of confidence-building measures and the consolidation of the ceasefire have still not had effect on the ground. In this connection, we strongly encourage the parties to sign an agreement on confidence-building measures and consolidation, including a commitment with a view to stopping the deployment of snipers, who are responsible for civilian and military casualties.

Lastly, the European Union reaffirms its full support for Ambassador Kasprzyk and his team, and wishes to voice its positive view of the work they are carrying out in often difficult conditions.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia and the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.