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**DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**  
**ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

**Statement**

**in Response to the Address of Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia and Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, H.E. Marina Kaljurand delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1101st Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

**May 26, 2016**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to warmly welcome H.E. Marina Kaljurand, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia and Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and express our gratitude for her interesting and comprehensive address.

Both the OSCE and the Council of Europe are highly relevant regional organizations, shaping the collective efforts of their participating and member states to maintain peace, security and stability in our wide region through active promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democracy. The visit of Minister Kaljurand to the OSCE and her address to the Permanent Council is illustrative of the high level of cooperation between our Organizations.

We welcome the willingness and readiness of the Council of Europe to cooperate with the OSCE respective partners. Here we would like to particularly mention positive interaction of the Council of Europe with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the ODIHR. Such cooperation will contribute to creation of synergy between our organizations in their efforts towards protection and promotion of human rights.

Speaking about synergy, we mean first of all utilization of comparative advantages of our organizations without unnecessary duplication. Among such advantages of the Council of Europe is its experience in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination. Today violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism are direct threats to our values, peace and security in the areas of operation of OSCE and Council of Europe. Fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance is essential in this regard. Armenia has been vocal in condemning hate speech and xenophobia, especially its use by public figures in the political discourse. Combating these phenomena has been a priority for Armenia during our Chairmanship at the Committee of Ministers and it continues to remain as such.

We highly value the activities of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance in combating intolerance and hate crimes. The reports of the ECRI reflect real problems in the sphere of extremism, racism, radicalization and hate crimes and provide clear-cut recommendations to address current challenges. Those reports can serve as guidance to our institutions for identifying those hate crimes which may represent threat to the security in the OSCE area.

It is the primary goal of Council of Europe to safeguard common values and individual rights at pan-European level. We firmly believe that the rights of individuals guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights must not be dependent on the status of the territory where peoples live. In this regard, we appreciate recent initiatives to discuss the subject of ensuring human rights in conflict zones. OSCE and Council of Europe can effectively cooperate in this field with the aim to make sure that there are no any areas of exclusion when it comes to enjoying human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this regard, we took note of the Conclusion of the Chairman on the 126th session of the Committee of the Ministers on the necessity of unrestricted, full and immediate access of the Council of Europe including its monitoring bodies and mechanisms to the conflict areas. This access is even more important amid grave violations of humanitarian and human rights as it was the case during the recent large scale military offensive of Azerbaijani armed forces against people of Nagorno-Karabakh which led to numerous atrocities. We also took note that the Conclusion of the Chairman refers to the human rights in Nagorno-Karabakh and underlines the necessity of confidence building measures.

Madam Minister,

The year of 2016 is an important milestone in relations between Armenia and the Council of Europe, as it marks the 15th Anniversary of Armenia's accession to the Organization. These have been years of fruitful cooperation in various areas of mutual interest. In a few days we will officially launch the Council of Europe 2015-2018 Action Plan for Armenia, which will further promote the reform process in our country.

In conclusion, we would also like to wish every success to Estonia in leading the Organization and pledge our full support to the Estonian Chairmanship in its endeavours.

Thank you.