

Statement

by H.E. Mr. Edward Nalbandian

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

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Mr. Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Chairman-in-Office, Didier Burkhalter and his team for their efforts and contribution to the activities of the Organization throughout the year, as well as to thank the Government of Switzerland for the hospitality and the good organization of the Ministerial Council.

As we mark the centennial of the First World War, and approach the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, it is worth to remember that the norms and principles on which this Organization is based were embraced as an outcome of painful lessons and bitter experiences of devastating calamities, millions of casualties and nearly complete distraction of the whole continent.

The first Genocide of the 20th century, the centennial of which will be commemorated next year, was perpetrated in the Ottoman Empire against the Armenian nation, under the cover of the First World War. It stands as a witness to what extent humanity can degrade in the absence of international system of protection of human rights and security.

The direct consequence of the tragic history of the 20th century was the aspiration to create a new common security space, free of wars, dividing lines, closed borders and spheres of influence, where the dignity of individual and fundamental freedoms are fully respected. Those ideas were later on reflected in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the main documents of the international law, empowering the people to promote and protect their rights and to freely pursue their own future. The exercise of these rights gave birth to many present day states through the right of peoples to self-determination.

It is based on these understanding that Armenia, along with other participating states, has contributed to the efforts to launch Helsinki + 40 process. We believe that in the year of 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act the reaffirmation of our adherence to its principles will give a new impetus to the OSCE and its endeavors.

Mr. Chairman,

The effectiveness of our Organization to a great extent depends on the ability to timely and effectively assess and diligently address evolving challenges in all three dimensions.

Arms control, confidence and security building measures should prominently figure on our agenda. Even under prevailing circumstances we need to seize every opportunity to prevent further erosion of the existing regimes and work hard to find new solutions through creative approaches.

We welcome the initiative of the Swiss Chairmanship to address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters. The massive and gross human rights violations perpetrated by such groups as ISIL and ANF, which capitalize on the flow of foreign terrorists, constitute a serious threat not only for the OSCE neighborhood, including our Mediterranean partners, but to the OSCE region as well.

Mr. Chairman,

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the cease-fire agreement, reached by Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Azerbaijan did everything to undermine the ceasefire regime, despite the calls of the international community to reinforce the cease-fire agreement of May 1994 and fully implement cease-fire consolidation agreement of February 1995. Military actions of the Azerbaijani side along the line of contact and on the Armenia Azerbaijani border, resulted in a significant loss of lives and drastically raised tensions on the ground.

During last years our diplomacy, together with the three Co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group, the only internationally agreed mediation format, has spared no efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. Despite the intensive efforts of the three Co-Chair countries during the last 6 years: about 20 summits, several dozens of meetings on ministerial level, visits of the three Co-Chairs to the region, it has been impossible to reach a breakthrough in the conflict resolution, because the Azerbaijani side rejected one after another all proposals presented by the mediators.

In Armenia we continue to believe that the elements outlined in the 5 statements of the heads of the Co-Chair countries on Nagorno-Karabakh can be the basis for reaching a fair and lasting settlement of the conflict. We share the position of the Co-Chair countries, that those elements should be seen as an integrated whole and that any attempt to select some elements over others would make it impossible to achieve a balanced solution.

Unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia has on several occasions reiterated and in response to the appeals of the Presidents of Russia, the United States and France, once again reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of international law, particularly the non-use of force or the threat of force, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and territorial integrity.

Azerbaijan is pretending that the international community shares its approaches and it shares the approaches of the international community, even pretended that it is ready to start the work on drafting peace agreement, while Baku failing to agree on the main principles of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In reality, Azerbaijan is continuously rejecting all proposals of the Co-Chair countries. Baku rejected all versions of the Basic Principles of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict proposed by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, including last versions presented at the Kazan (June

2011), Sochi (March 2011), Astrakhan (October 2011) and Saint Petersburg (June 2010) summits.

Baku rejected not only the Basic Principles, but also confidence-building measures proposed by the Co-Chairs on consolidation of ceasefire and the establishment of a mechanism for investigation of the ceasefire violations, taking entire responsibility for its

An Armenian villager who had mistakenly wandered into the territory of Azerbaijan was arrested, humiliated in front of cameras, a tactic used by notorious terrorist organizations, and was found dead the following day.

The more the international community, through the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs appeals to the sides of the conflict to prepare populations for peace and not war, the more we hear from Azerbaijan, including in the top level, increasing bellicose warmongering, anti-Armenian hate-speech, glorification of murderers of Armenians and persecution of those journalists, civil society activists, representatives of intelligentsia, who pursue confidence building and reconciliation projects, presenting them as "Armenian spies". The more the international community is calling on the sides to withdraw snipers from the line of contact, the more sniper shootings, provocative incidents, subversive acts are coming from the Azerbaijani side, resulting in numerous casualties.

The more oil revenues are enriching the Azerbaijani budget, the more weaponry and armament are purchased by Baku. In 2015 Azerbaijan's military budget will reach 4,8 bln USD, almost 30 times increase in a decade since Ilham Aliyev inherited the power from his father. The absolutely disproportionate military spending and acquisition of excess armaments by Azerbaijan poses a serious threat to regional and international stability and security.

Such a militaristic posture is fuelled up by anti-Armenian propaganda and xenophobia.

Year after year Armenia has been raising its concerns from this podium over the militaristic rhetoric, blatant violation of international commitments and anti-Armenian hysteria and hatred being injected into the Azerbaijani society from the highest levels of its leadership.

Many international organizations on human rights alerted about flagrant cases of racism, intolerance and violations of human rights in Azerbaijan, alerted on the policy of hatred against Armenians.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its report on Azerbaijan noted with deep concern the "constant and negative official and media discourse concerning the Republic of Armenia" and recommended the Azerbaijani authorities to "adopt an appropriate response to all cases of discrimination and hate speech against Armenians". What is the Azerbaijani response? Baku is trying to impose its own distorted perception of human rights on others, organizes fake conferences on tolerance and freedoms.

Responsive nature of our organization entails proper assessment and adequate reaction to this behavior.

It is clear that international community should not tolerate the attempts of the Azerbaijani leadership to adjust the international law to their own racist ideology. Having a rich internal experience in corruption Baku is attempting to transfer it to

interstate relations exploiting it as a tool to impose its own misperceptions on others. The international community could not tolerate the attempts of Azerbaijan to replace the rule of law with the rule of oil.

In the last August, September and October, the Co-Chair countries, first the President of Russia in Sochi, then the Secretary of State of the USA in Newport, and then the President of France in Paris, with participation of the Heads of States of Armenia and Azerbaijan, organized Summit meetings to reduce the tensions and prevent further escalation of the situation.

Immediately after the Paris meeting the leadership of Azerbaijan raised another wave of anti-Armenian provocative rhetoric, and the Defense Minister of that country claimed again that his country would solve the Nagorno-Karabakh issue through military means.

The recent shooting down by the Azerbaijani armed forces of the helicopter of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army during a training flight, which took the lives of three young servicemen, is Baku's latest criminal provocation. The Azerbaijani army for almost ten days continuously kept the area of the helicopter shooting under intensive fire, hindering rescue teams, the OSCE, International Committee of the Red Cross representatives to approach that site and evacuate the bodies of killed crew members, which became another gross violation of international humanitarian law by Azerbaijan.

Baku continues to oppose itself to the international community, which was once again demonstrated by its reaction to the statement of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs on the helicopter shooting. Azerbaijan is clearly losing the sense of reality and day by day is deepening the gap between itself and the civilized world.

To achieve a durable peace, stability and security in the region, Armenia will continue to invest its utmost efforts towards the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict exclusively through peaceful means and on the basis of the purposes, principles and norms reflected in the UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act and the provisions of the statements of the Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries' Presidents in L'Aquila, Muskoka, Deauville, Los Cabos and Enniskillen.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, I would like to express Armenia's readiness to support the incoming Serbian Chairmanship in the implementation of its agenda.

Thank you.