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**Chairmanship: Albania****SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
(1282nd Plenary Meeting)**

1. Date: Tuesday, 29 September 2020 (in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference)

Opened: 5.05 p.m.

Closed: 7.25 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador I. Hasani

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: UPDATE BY THE PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OSCE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE ON THE CONFLICT DEALT WITH BY THE OSCE MINSK CONFERENCE

Chairperson, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, France (also on behalf of the Russian Federation and the United States of America), Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova and San Marino, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1267/20), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1219/20), United States of America (PC.DEL/1218/20), France (PC.DEL/1227/20 OSCE+), Canada (PC.DEL/1220/20 OSCE+), Norway, Switzerland (PC.DEL/1222/20 OSCE+), United Kingdom (PC.DEL/1238/20 OSCE+), Kazakhstan, Ukraine (PC.DEL/1223/20), Greece, Representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Italy, Belarus (PC.DEL/1252/20 OSCE+), Georgia (PC.DEL/1230/20 OSCE+), Turkey (Annex 1), Cyprus, Azerbaijan (Annex 2), Armenia (Annex 3)

Agenda item 2:       REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

None

Agenda item 3:       ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

4.   Next meeting:

Thursday, 1 October 2020, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference



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**1282nd Plenary Meeting**

PC Journal No. 1282, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

We appreciate the presence of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference. We have taken note of his update.

Mr. Chairperson,

Azerbaijan is a country with which Turkey has deep-rooted friendly ties and brotherly relations. As President Erdoğan stated on 27 September, the Turkish nation continues to stand by its Azerbaijani brothers and sisters with all its means, as it has always done.

On 27 September, Armenian armed forces launched intense shelling with heavy arms against Azerbaijani army positions and civilian residential areas in violation of the ceasefire along the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh.

We strongly condemn the Armenian attacks. We would like to express our condolences to Azerbaijan on the loss of the Azerbaijanis who lost their lives in the attacks, and to their families. We wish speedy recovery to the wounded.

The Armenian attacks constitute a clear violation of international law and have caused civilian casualties. Armenia's provocations have now reached a level that directly targets international and regional peace and stability. Armenia has once again shown that it is the biggest obstacle to peace and stability in the region.

Turkey supports Azerbaijan fully and with unwavering solidarity in this process. Our support for Azerbaijan is not just due to our special bonds. We strongly support Azerbaijan because it occupies the moral high ground. It is the damaged party in terms of international law. It has also been suffering the humanitarian burden, with hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons.

Azerbaijan is using its right of self-defence in order to protect its people and its territorial integrity. It is important to see that from a legal point of view, the Azerbaijani armed forces are conducting counter-operations within Azerbaijan's own internationally

recognized borders, on territory which has been under illegal Armenian occupation for nearly three decades.

Armenia prefers the conflict to remain unsolved. It benefits from the deadlock. It portrays itself as if it was negotiating. It is happy with years of no-result from the Minsk Group. The non-resolution of the conflict rewards Armenia. This is not sustainable. And it is legally and morally wrong. The Armenian approach to perpetuating its illegal occupation is even stated in Armenia's new National Security Strategy Paper.

Armenia has also started the illegal settlement of ethnic Armenians on occupied territories, including ethnic Armenians from the Middle East. This is in contravention of the Geneva Conventions. Armenia is trying to change the demographic structure of the territories it has occupied.

Turkey has adopted a consistent attitude regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from the beginning. Turkey continues to support a peaceful and negotiated solution on the basis of international law and within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

We understand the disappointment of Azerbaijan at the failure of the Minsk Process to make concrete progress towards a solution. We find it understandable that Azerbaijan protects its rights against Armenia. Armenia is guilty. Yet, it tries to play the innocent and seeks to pass the buck. This is the Armenian psychology.

Armenia is resorting to the practice of distorting historical events. It is acting in hysteria. This approach is the manifestation of a mentality which constructs its identity by solely deriving enmity from a one-sided interpretation of history and which tries to legitimize its own aggression in contravention of international law.

Mr. Chairperson,

Standing – in the name of impartiality – at an equal distance from the offender and the victim means rewarding the invader, namely Armenia. This approach is neither legally nor morally correct. Neutral statements of concern only appease and maybe even encourage Armenia. They do not deter Armenia.

The Armenian disregard of the United Nations Security Council resolutions and OSCE decisions is making a mockery of international norms. And the Minsk Group has not been able to change this for years. How can we talk about a rules-based international order if we turn a blind eye to this land-grab?

The international community should stand with the righteous and with the real victim.

We call upon the international community, in particular the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, to exert pressure on Armenia in a way calculated to induce it to return to meaningful and comprehensive negotiations.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.



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**1282nd Plenary Meeting**

PC Journal No. 1282, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF AZERBAIJAN**

Mr. Chairperson,

To begin with, we wish to express our disappointment that the Albanian Chairmanship decided to call this special meeting of the Permanent Council without proper prior consultation with the delegation of Azerbaijan.

I would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to yet another large-scale military provocation by Armenia against Azerbaijan along the front line. In the morning of 27 September 2020, the armed forces of Armenia opened fire and attacked the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan, using large-calibre weapons, mortar launchers and artillery. As a result, there have been casualties among the civilians and military servicemen of Azerbaijan. Substantial damage has been inflicted upon private and public properties and infrastructure. As of today, 12 civilians have been killed, including two children. Five of them were members of one family. Thirty-five civilians have been seriously wounded.

As was the case in April 2016 and most recently in July 2020, Armenian armed forces are deliberately targeting civilian population and infrastructure in violation of Armenia's obligations and fundamental norms and principles of international law, including international humanitarian law. As we speak, Armenian armed forces are continuing the artillery shelling of densely populated areas inside Azerbaijan adjacent to the front line. One hundred and fifty residential buildings have been destroyed. The fact sheet has been distributed under reference number SEC.DEL/394/20.

In order to repel military aggression by Armenia and ensure the security of civilians and densely populated residential areas deep inside the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan, the armed forces of Azerbaijan are undertaking counter-offensive measures within the right of self-defence and in full compliance with international humanitarian law. Azerbaijan is acting on its own sovereign soil, taking adequate and proportionate measures necessary to repulse the imminent threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity and to the security of its civilian population.

On account of the continued occupation by the armed forces of Armenia of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and adjacent districts of Azerbaijan and of armed attacks and military provocations against Azerbaijan, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

declared martial law in the country starting from midnight on 27/28 September 2020, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

This act of aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan is yet another blatant violation of fundamental norms and principles of international law and in particular international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, and furthermore of United Nations Security Council resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 of 1993, demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/62/243 entitled “Situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan”.

This armed attack is not an isolated or sporadic act, but is part of Armenia’s widespread and systematic policy of the use of force and should be considered in the context of consistent attempts by the leadership of Armenia to derail the peace process by resorting to irresponsible statements and actions. It is the continuation of the most recent provocations by the Armenian side, including its armed attack in the direction of Tovuz district from 12 to 16 July 2020, the sabotage-reconnaissance group’s provocation in the direction of Goranboy district on 23 August, illegal change of the demographic, cultural and physical character of the seized lands, including by the settlement of the Armenian population into these territories and engaging in unlawful economic and other activities there, as well as other provocative statements and actions by the Armenian leadership.

In the interest of time, I will not list all the warmongering statements and actions on the part of the Armenian leadership. The delegation of Azerbaijan has distributed among the participating States a non-exhaustive compilation in the document SEC.DEL/373/20. Today, I will focus on some of these notorious actions, their consequences and implications for the conflict settlement process, and the way forward.

Despite certain expectations, the calm situation along the front line since at least September 2018 did not result in progress in the negotiations. On the contrary, notwithstanding a certain intensification in the frequency of meetings between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenia’s lack of political will to resolve the conflict further crystallized into an open defiance of any kind of progress in the process of political settlement of the conflict. Instead of delivering on its commitment to prepare its population for peace, the Armenian leadership has replicated its predecessors’ policy, both in words and deeds, and has even gone further by derailing the peace process beyond repair. The Armenian Prime Minister’s statement “Karabakh is Armenia” stands as the most serious blow to the negotiation process. Most recently, he put forward unacceptable and groundless so-called seven conditions to Azerbaijan, including his new invention, the so-called “self-determination without limitations”, which has nothing in common with international law and the OSCE principles and commitments and runs contrary to the United Nations Security Council resolutions and OSCE decisions on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Armenia is continuously challenging the format of negotiations by attempting to introduce the unlawful puppet regime it established in the occupied territories as party to the negotiations. The Armenian senior officials publicly denounce their adherence to the logic and understandings that have underlain the OSCE Minsk Group-led negotiation process for years. They reject the step-by-step approach in the conflict settlement and misinterpret the

key OSCE documents and decisions on the conflict settlement and also the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

These statements and actions vividly demonstrate that this country has chosen not to seize the opportunity to engage constructively in the negotiations and is desperately trying to derail the peace process at all costs in order to prolong the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan with a view to imposing a *fait accompli*.

Let me reiterate once again that the step-by-step approach, addressing in the first stage the elimination of the major consequences of the conflict, starting with immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, is based on the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and OSCE decisions, in particular of the Helsinki Additional Meeting of the CSCE Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 1992 and the 1994 Budapest Summit decision defining the mandate of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and providing the political and legal framework for the resolution of the conflict. These are consensus-based decisions of the OSCE endorsed by the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and are not subject to re-negotiation. We have repeatedly warned our interlocutors that deviation from this established framework of negotiations is a serious blow to the entire peace process and must be properly addressed by the international community, in particular the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

There have been statements to the effect that there is no military solution to the conflict. We also would like to believe that. But when making such statements, one should also consider what the impediments to the political resolution of the conflict are, what the obstacles to eliminating its consequences are, and what steps must be taken to address them. Are we moving in the right direction? Are we, the OSCE participating States, doing enough to implement our own decisions? In response we hear deafening silence.

The lack of adequate reaction on the part of the international community, including the OSCE, to Armenia's irresponsible, warmongering statements and aggressive actions, notorious double standards and selective approaches in application of the principles of the Helsinki Final Act has only contributed to this country's sense of impunity and to the permissiveness that led to the Armenian adventurism of two days ago.

Today I am addressing those who have called for a ceasefire and resumption of serious, substantive negotiations. I will take this opportunity to dwell upon the issue of a ceasefire, referred to by the representatives of the European Union (including aligned countries), the Russian Federation, the United States of America, France, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Kazakhstan, Greece, Italy, Belarus, Georgia, Cyprus and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, since the experience of previous years shows that their interpretation of ceasefire is very narrow.

First, the ceasefire must be respected and implemented fully and unreservedly. One cannot demand to abide by a ceasefire regime only to the extent that it fits one's own interests, but ignore its violations when it does not. As we have repeatedly pointed out to the international community, the continuation of the conflict and the illegal presence of the Armenian armed forces in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan remain the main causes for violation of the ceasefire regime and for escalation of the situation. The 1994 ceasefire stems

from and is based on relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. United Nations Security Council resolution 822 of 1993 makes an explicit connection between the cessation of all hostilities through the establishment of a durable ceasefire and the immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The 1994 cessation of fire and of all military activities in the conflict zone required both sides to pursue a set of specific measures such as withdrawal of troops from the occupied territories, deployment of international observers, restoration of communications, return of displaced population and the continuation of the negotiation process. Therefore, the ceasefire accord established a clear linkage between the cessation of fire and military activities on the one hand, and the withdrawal of the Armenian troops from the occupied territories, the restoration of communications and the return of internally displaced persons to their homes on the other. Similar elements are reflected in relevant OSCE documents of 1992, 1994 and 1996 with a slightly different wording.

So, we have to be clear that these measures and the linkages between them have to be considered in their entirety and not with the singling out of particular elements. One cannot demand respect for the ceasefire regime and at the same time limit its scope of application only to exchange of fire across the front line from different types of weapons. Violations of the ceasefire include such instances as attempts to consolidate the occupation of territories, entrenching and building up military positions, transferring military equipment and hardware to these territories, conducting large-scale military exercises, refusing to withdraw from the occupied territories, or denying the return of internally displaced persons to their homes of origin. These are the major elements of the policy and practice that Armenia openly pursues over the last decades in direct violation of the ceasefire accord. However, we have not heard for decades any condemnation of these violations of the ceasefire regime, neither in the OSCE nor in public.

Second, a ceasefire, even when it is long-standing, is not meant to last forever. It is meant to be a springboard for diplomatic action to resolve the conflict politically. I wish to stress that in the ceasefire accords, Azerbaijan and Armenia reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate and intensify the negotiations for the conclusion of a political agreement on cessation of the armed conflict. This commitment is a key element and integral part of the ceasefire regime, and one which identifies its overall purpose. The ceasefire regime can hardly be sustainable if there are no substantive negotiations towards resolution of the conflict. The negotiations have been undermined by the Armenian leadership's refusal to engage in substantive talks, accompanied by extremely provocative and bellicose statements. That was the main reason behind the failure of the ceasefire. The recent escalation proves this fact.

As far as calls for substantive negotiations are concerned, such negotiations must have concrete objectives, outcomes and outputs as identified by the United Nations Security Council resolutions and the OSCE decisions. We have not seen clarity as to what the objectives of the Minsk Process are and what the concrete outputs for the Minsk Group should be in order to achieve those objectives. When we wanted to clarify these objectives, including through the Unified Budget process, we were faced with resistance from the Co-Chair countries, the High-Level Planning Group and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office. Instead, what we were offered was to discuss vague conditions conducive to resumption of negotiations, which in itself is a precondition. Since at least September 2018 we have seen unprecedented calm along the front line. Has it resulted in



substantive result-oriented negotiations or any perceptible progress that we could register?!  
The answer is no.

Azerbaijan has consistently stated that the current status quo and tensions along the front line do not serve its interests and it is the party most interested in finding a soonest, durable solution to the conflict. However, the armed forces of Azerbaijan will not sit idly by but will respond appropriately to provocations and ceasefire violations by Armenia. It should be made clear that neither the 1993 United Nations Security Council resolutions nor the ceasefire divested Azerbaijan of its inherent right of self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter that solidified once and for all, in view of the continuing aggression and occupation of our territories by Armenia, which has been determined as unlawful by the United Nations Security Council.

In the above-mentioned circumstances, Azerbaijan is compelled to defend its citizens and its territory against the armed aggression of Armenia. Azerbaijan's position is impeccable from all legal, political and moral points of view as it is acting within its internationally recognized territory in response to an external armed attack by Armenia and in the absence of any condemnation of the occupying power or of effective mediation efforts by the OSCE Minsk Group.

Our military objectives are to protect and to prevent further loss of life of innocent Azerbaijani civilians by neutralizing the illegal presence of the Armenian armed forces in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and to achieve a sustainable and durable peace in our country and region.

I wish to inform the Permanent Council that the Azerbaijani armed forces have successfully started to implement the tasks outlined by the President of Azerbaijan and have liberated part of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

The administration of the President, Defence Ministry and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan have been providing regular press briefings and updates on the military counter-offensive operation carried out along the entire perimeter of the line of contact in full compliance with international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols.

It should be stressed that speculations about mercenaries being used and a third-party involvement in the military operation on the side of Azerbaijan are groundless. The only forces conducting the military operation are the Azerbaijani armed forces. The morale and motivation of the Azerbaijani armed forces and the Azerbaijani people are very high and the determination of our nation to liberate our occupied territories is unflinching.

Azerbaijan is resolutely determined to continue the counter-offensive operation until its sovereignty and territorial integrity are fully restored and all threats and risks to the safety and security of Azerbaijani people are eliminated. Once the Armenian armed forces' illegal presence in our territories has been eliminated, Azerbaijan will be ready to engage in dialogue with partner countries and the international community on reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts for the conflict-affected territories. We hope that at that stage it will be possible for the region to be exposed to more opportunities for co-operation and development.

Azerbaijan would like to sincerely thank those countries and international organizations who have extended their principled and resolute support to Azerbaijan in its just cause and struggle in the Patriotic War. This has been a serious test for our friendship and the supremacy of international law and Azerbaijan will never forget your backing. Especially, I would like to extend my gratitude to the people and government of brotherly Turkey, which on various levels has stood together with the Azerbaijani nation on this path. We are proud to have such an ally and brotherly country as Turkey standing together with Azerbaijan for justice and security.

Azerbaijan understands that the road to a region free of conflict and occupation may be thorny, deeply painful and sorrowful for the people of our neighbouring country of Armenia, who for generations have been led astray by the previous and current regimes' dreams of territorial expansionism based on discrimination against Azerbaijanis. However, the Azerbaijani nation was patient enough under the continued occupation of its territories to pin its hopes on a change in the mindset of the current Armenian regime, including with the support of the Minsk Group. Unfortunately, these expectations have not been realized and we see no other way to restore Azerbaijan's infringed territorial integrity. The Azerbaijani nation, like many other countries in the world, seeks no land of its neighbours, but will not yield an inch of its own land to anyone.

There is still a way for the current generation of Armenians to avoid a massive loss of lives by ensuring an immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. This is a demand of the United Nations Security Council. Azerbaijan calls on those countries who spoke in favour of establishing a ceasefire to persuade the Armenian leadership to abandon its revanchist and populist policy and to spare thousands of lives.

We hope to see that the OSCE Minsk Group will at least be able to fully understand Azerbaijan's seriousness of intent and will call on Armenia to withdraw its troops from the occupied territories and allow peace to return to the region.

Until that happens and we clearly see the Armenian troops leaving the territory of Azerbaijan, we will continue our legitimate military operation and will keep the Permanent Council updated on developments on the ground in due course.

The Republic of Azerbaijan reiterates that the military occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan does not represent a solution and will never produce a political outcome desired by Armenia. The resolution of the conflict is possible only on the basis of the norms and principles of international law, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, in full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders. Azerbaijan considers no political solution to the conflict outside this framework and only participates in the settlement process on the basis of this understanding.

The sooner Armenia becomes reconciled to this reality, the sooner the conflict will be resolved and the sooner the countries and peoples in the region will benefit from the prospect of co-operation and economic development.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.



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**1282nd Plenary Meeting**

PC Journal No. 1282, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to thank the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship for convening this special meeting of the Permanent Council and also the Chairperson-in-Office for his statement on the aggression launched by Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh. I would further like to thank the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference for the information he provided to the Council, although I believe that this information was not complete because of certain constraints faced by the Personal Representative and his team.

I also thank all those delegations that took the floor calling for an immediate stop to the violence and for restoration of the ceasefire regime.

Before addressing the current situation along the Line of Contact between the Republic of Artsakh and Azerbaijan, I would like to inform the participating States that this morning the Azerbaijani armed forces attacked the positions of Armenia's armed forces near the town of Vardenis in eastern Armenia, shelling the adjacent villages and settlements and also deploying their air force. A passenger bus was hit by an Azerbaijani unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV); civilian infrastructure was shelled. With the active encouragement and also the political and military support of Turkey, Azerbaijan has thus extended the geographical scope of the hostilities to the territory of the Republic of Armenia proper.

The situation we are facing today is one of a large-scale war. Civilian settlements civilian infrastructure are being shelled and bombarded in blatant violation of all norms and principles of humanitarian law. People are being killed and wounded.

Mr. Chairperson,

The large-scale military aggression of Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh began early in the morning of 27 September. The Azerbaijani armed forces unleashed a massive offensive along the entire Line of Contact. The defensive facilities of the Artsakh Defence Army, civilian infrastructure and settlements, including the capital city of Stepanakert, came under heavy bombardment by tanks, helicopters, heavy artillery, UAVs and multiple rocket launchers, including launchers with a calibre of 300 mm and greater. Moreover, Turkish F-16 fighter jets – which were deployed in Azerbaijan under the pretext of

joint large-scale military exercises following the Azerbaijani offensive of 12–16 July and remained there after the exercises ended – were spotted near the Line of Contact.

Mr. Chairperson,

Azerbaijan has never made any secret of its strategic goal to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by force, keeping the tension high along the Line of Contact and the Armenian-Azerbaijani State border. During and after the July offensive, the Turkish military presence in Azerbaijan began to grow, further stoking Azerbaijan’s belligerent aspirations.

Even though Azerbaijan tries to portray its aggression as being “in response to Armenia’s actions”, there is ample evidence to the contrary. I would cite in this respect the decision by the Azerbaijani authorities to recall for “military training” reservists long discharged from active service, or to the fact that on 21 September, the Azerbaijani authorities started confiscating pickup vehicles from their owners for the needs of the army. Moreover, on 25 September, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan rejected the request by the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office to organize ceasefire monitoring along the Line of Contact.

All these facts prove beyond any doubt that Azerbaijan was getting ready for a military offensive, which it finally launched on 27 September. Moreover, no one at this meeting has so far been able to provide me with any logical explanation as to why Armenia or the Republic of Artsakh should have started the aggression. This is an existential struggle for the Armenian people both in Artsakh and in the Republic of Armenia and we are destined to prevail over the aggressors.

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Armenia has on numerous occasions voiced its concerns about the destabilizing policy and actions of Turkey in the wider Middle East region in general and in the South Caucasus in particular. On 30 July, we raised the subject of Turkey’s aggressive policy and military posturing as a destabilizing factor in the South Caucasus as a current issue at the 1277th plenary meeting of the Permanent Council.

At the meeting of 30 July, we also informed the participating States of, and expressed our deep concerns about, the joint military exercises conducted by Azerbaijan together with Turkey immediately after its military offensive against the north-eastern sector of Armenia’s State border earlier that month. The exercises involved thousands of military personnel, hundreds of armoured combat vehicles, artillery and military aviation, including UAVs. We subsequently pointed out that Turkish military personnel and equipment had remained stationed in Azerbaijan after the conclusion of these exercises.

It is well known that Turkey has been supporting Azerbaijan in the context of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict since the 1990s, when it imposed a land blockade on the Republic of Armenia. However, Turkey’s support for Azerbaijani aggression has changed in nature: it is now characterized by a direct Turkish military presence on the ground. We firmly believe that Turkey has fanned militaristic sentiment in Azerbaijan and, in particular, that it has instigated the current aggression through its bellicose rhetoric and is providing technical

and military support: for example, the Azerbaijani armed forces are fighting using Turkish weapons, including UAVs and warplanes.

After the start of the current Azerbaijani large-scale military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey once again assured Azerbaijan of its unreserved political and military support.

In terms of political backing, on 27 September, shortly after the first attacks, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, issued a statement addressed to his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, in which he expressed Turkey's unilateral support for Azerbaijan based on the concept of "one nation, two States". President Erdoğan went even further by claiming that Armenia was the main threat to the peace and security of the region. These statements coming from the leader of a State that is either involved militarily on the territory of its neighbours or threatens the legitimate interests of other States is grotesquely cynical, to say the least.

Furthermore, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, stated that Turkey was ready to support Azerbaijan not only at the negotiating table but also on the battlefield. One of President Erdoğan's senior advisers, İnanç Cervik, assured the Azerbaijani Government of Turkey's support no matter how far it went, insisting that Azerbaijan was free to act as it wished. The deputy chairman of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party, Numan Kurtulmuş, stressed that Turkey perceived Azerbaijan's problems as its own: "Armenia is engaged in provocations. We regard the attacks on Azerbaijan as an attack on Turkey." He then added: "We will do everything to help brotherly Azerbaijan. In the end, it will win its struggle."

As for the military assistance, on 27 September, two military airplanes of Turkey and Azerbaijan carried out at least six flights transferring military cargo. Four flights were conducted by a Turkish Airbus A400M-180, and two by an Azerbaijani Ilyushin IL-76TD. Additionally, another Ilyushin aircraft (IL-76TD-90VD), in this case belonging to the Azerbaijani company Silk Way Airlines, carried out a cargo flight between Turkey, Israel and Azerbaijan.

Moreover, there have been persistent credible reports of Syrian foreign terrorist fighters being recruited by Turkey and its local affiliates for deployment in Azerbaijan. This has not come as a surprise, since it is a tactic that Turkey has already used in Libya. Some 4,000 such fighters recruited to fight against Armenia and Artsakh are reported to have been sent by Turkey to Azerbaijan by 23 September. Already yesterday a number of international media outlets covered this matter. Not surprisingly, the only countries denying these reports are Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Turkey also provides full political and propaganda support to Azerbaijan at the highest level. In early September, Turkey and Azerbaijan agreed to establish a joint media platform aimed at exchanging news, specialists and opinions, and also at helping to promote both countries worldwide through social media. Ironically, since 27 September, when Azerbaijan launched its large-scale aggression against Artsakh, all social media in Azerbaijan have been blocked. The Azerbaijani population can thus not receive any reliable information.

Turkey's stance does not surprise us. That country's sentiments towards Armenia and the Armenian people are no secret to anyone, whether at this meeting or in the wider world for that matter. The statement just delivered by the Permanent Representative of Turkey goes to show that when Turkish officials speak about values and morality they discredit those notions.

Turkey, which a century ago annihilated the Armenian people in their historical homeland – a crime against humanity that it continues to deny to this day – now supports Azerbaijan in every possible way to perpetrate a similar genocidal act in the South Caucasus.

Ever since the July offensive – though even before then – and more so now, Turkish involvement in Azerbaijan's military actions has been plain for everyone to see. Turkey is using the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a pretext to project its influence into the region and beyond – specifically to transform the South Caucasus into a zone of its exclusive political and military influence. This approach fits perfectly in the grand strategy or, I should say, the grand dream of Turkish President Erdoğan, who wishes to revive the Ottoman Empire. The war being waged in Artsakh today is the return of the ghost of that empire, which 105 years ago planned and carried out the Armenian Genocide. Under no circumstances can we allow this monstrous crime to be repeated.

Dear Colleagues,

A few minutes ago, the Ministry of Defence of Armenia reported that a Turkish F-16 fighter jet has attacked an Armenian SU-25 jet within the airspace of Armenia, thus escalating the conflict to a new level. The combat engagement of an aircraft belonging to Turkey, a NATO member, against Armenia's sovereign territory attests to Turkey's high level of irresponsibility and to that country's true nature.

Turkey should immediately withdraw its military from Azerbaijan, including its air force. We think it is high time for the international community to reconsider its policy of appeasement and take the necessary measures so as to firmly dissuade Turkey from pursuing its destructive course. If the international community fails to act decisively now, we will soon reach the point of no return.

Mr. Chairperson,

Armenia has been and remains a staunch supporter of the mandate and activities of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and of the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, which are aimed to assisting the parties in finding a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

We have taken note of the recent statement issued by the Co-Chairs on 27 September, in which they “strongly condemn[ed] the use of force” and called to the sides “to cease hostilities immediately” and “to take all necessary measures to stabilize the situation on the ground”. The latest aggression by Azerbaijan against Artsakh and Armenia constitutes a grave violation of the 1994–1995 trilateral ceasefire agreements and other commitments. For the benefit of the Azerbaijani delegation, I should underline once again that the ceasefire agreements were signed between Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Armenia. This is something that Azerbaijan should always bear in mind. However, instead of reconsidering its

unconstructive and maximalist position on a number of issues related to the peace process, Azerbaijan, with the full support and encouragement of Turkey, is resorting to the tactics of unjustified criticism and blaming of others, including the Co-Chairs, for the lack of progress in the peace talks, threatening to withdraw from the negotiation process and to start a new war for Nagorno-Karabakh territories. This pattern has been going on for many years. Azerbaijan will pay a high price for unleashing this war and destabilizing the region – a price that should be both political and military. Already the Azerbaijani casualty toll is revealing the recklessness of President Aliyev’s policy to legitimize his and his family’s grip on power by sending his country’s people to die in battle.

Mr. Chairperson,

Attempts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by force did not help back in the 1990s or in 2016; nor will they help now. Such attempts will merely cause further suffering and destruction, making the prospect of a peaceful settlement even more elusive.

Again, we believe that in the current situation the Co-Chairs should immediately travel to the region in order to undertake their internationally mandated efforts directly on the ground, together with the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office. Armenia stands ready to assist in every possible way with the organization of a visit by the Co-Chairs, and if anyone is hindering or opposing such a visit, then the Co-Chairs must state so clearly and publicly.

We concur with the long-standing position of the Co-Chairs and many others that there is no alternative to a peaceful negotiated solution to the conflict. Therefore, we believe that the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group and the OSCE participating States should raise their voice and urge those who unleashed this war to restore the ceasefire and return to the quest for a political and diplomatic settlement. The tremendous price that the peoples of the region are paying for this military adventure by Azerbaijan’s authoritarian leader should serve as a wake-up call to all, indicating the urgency of taking concrete action without delay.

Thank you.