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Statement by H.E. Mr. Edward Nalbandian

ENGLISH only

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

at the 852nd Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, 3 March, 2011

Mr. Chairman,

Secretary General,

Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here today and to address the Permanent Council of the OSCE. I think that it is important to personally share with you some thoughts that are relevant today not only for Armenia but also for this Organisation as a whole.

This year is truly symbolic for a number of participating States of the OSCE, who are celebrating the 20th anniversary of independence. New political landscape that emerged nearly two decades ago has significantly transformed the security environment of the Euro-Atlantic area. The OSCE community embraced new countries with shared vision of building comprehensive, equal and indivisible security area free of dividing lines, where fundamental freedoms and human rights are respected.

The OSCE has an important role in dealing with security and cooperation issues. In the current fragile regional environment we regard it as a valuable component of our security. Armenia is ready to contribute, in the spirit and consonant with purposes and principles set forth in the Helsinki Final Act, to the efforts to revitalise this Organisation by making it stronger, more reliable, effective and responsive.

The Corfu process, launched two years ago, can serve as an engine for generating an open dialogue and for examining the possibility of reinvigorating the OSCE role and strengthening the profile of our Organisation. All three dimensions of the OSCE are integral and equal parts of our common activities aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the OSCE. In Astana, we recommitted ourselves to creating a security community through joint efforts and concerted actions, ensuring full and fair application of all the OSCE principles and norms.

Armenia is working hard to ensure the sustainability of its progress in building modern society, based on the rule of law and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this context Armenia highly values close cooperation within the international framework, including the OSCE institutions and executive structures. Last year we made important step towards ensuring free and pluralistic media in Armenia by decriminalising defamation law. The working group established by the initiative of the President of Armenia and chaired by the Ombudsman of Armenia is working out the recommendations for amendments to the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting in Armenia and I am pleased to note that package of amendments, after appropriate legal expertise, will be submitted to the Parliament for deliberations. It is also worth noting that last year Armenia hosted the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy, a landmark event both on the international and national level. The useful mechanism on Human Rights Dialogue between Armenia and the EU has been established.

The Armenian Government pays special attention to fighting corruption, including in cooperation with our European partners, towards implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy in order to effectively address various aspects of this problem.

We are taking appropriate measures and will continue to make consistent steps to promote democratic state-building as referred to by the President of Armenia in his speech of December 18, 2010, when he was speaking of the necessity to develop “a well-developed democracy, a more active political dialogue, and persistent adaptation of the European standards into all areas of our political, social and economic lives.” This is our choice.

In Astana, Heads of State and Government once again reiterated that promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights remains high on our agenda. While attaching importance to such aspects as elections, freedom of media, freedom of assembly, tolerance and non-discrimination we must also take into consideration one of the fundamental rights of peoples - the right to choose their own destiny. We have witnessed time and again the successful exercise of this right that is supported by most participating States of this Organisation and indeed, the wider international community. The denial and violation of this fundamental right is one of the root-causes of existing tensions and conflicts, which continue to be of deep concern to all of us.

Mr. Chairman,

There is certainly a great deal of interest in this Organisation towards the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution process and I would like to specially address this issue.

In 1921, by the decision of the Caucasian Bureau of the Bolshevik Party, Nagorno Karabakh, populated by Armenians for thousands of years, was annexed to the Soviet Azerbaijan as an autonomous region.

In 1991, in full accordance with the then existing laws, the people of Karabakh exercised the same right to self-determination as Azerbaijan, when the latter proclaimed its independence from the Soviet Union. In its resolution of June 21, 1999, the European Parliament stated that Nagorno Karabakh declared its independence following similar declarations by former Soviet Socialist Republics. The war in Karabakh started, when Azerbaijan tried to suppress Karabakh for their choice to live freely, by starting ethnic cleansing and then unleashing a large-scale military aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh, involving mercenaries closely linked to the international terrorist organizations. In the face of imminent elimination of its people, Nagorno Karabakh was forced to resort to self-defense.

As a result of their failed military adventure in May 1994 Azerbaijan concluded a tripartite ceasefire agreement with Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia. Unfortunately, this rare opportunity to establish durable peace, which could have marked the beginning of

peaceful coexistence and development for the peoples of the region, is to date being abused by Azerbaijan for preparing a new military aggression.

Over the past years Armenia spared no effort to find a durable and just resolution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh.

Armenia speaks of peace. Azerbaijan openly speaks of war. Hostile, state-supported propaganda and hatred against Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia and Armenians, apparent falsifications of history, which have overwhelmed Azerbaijan, increasing military rhetoric and military build-up, threat of use of force, provocations on the Line of Contact, put the question mark on Baku's readiness to a peaceful settlement.

International community, the UN Secretary General, OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries, and different OSCE Chairmanships, including the current Lithuanian, have made proposals on consolidation of cease-fire and on withdrawal of snipers from the Line of Contact, both initiatives supported by Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. President of Armenia proposed to reach an agreement on non-use of force, which was supported by international community and again rejected by Azerbaijan. By rejecting these proposals Azerbaijan opposes itself against international community, undermining the latter's efforts to resolve the conflict.

Mr. Chairman,

The negotiations are currently conducted on the basis of the Madrid proposals that were presented to the sides in November 2007.

First, Armenia supports three principles of the Madrid proposal – not to use force or threat of force, self-determination and territorial integrity- as basis for negotiations. Azerbaijan rejects them all but one, the territorial integrity, with its own interpretation of the latter. Armenia's position is consistent with the position of the OSCE participating states, reflected in the Ministerial statements in Helsinki 2008, Athens 2009, reiterated by the statements made by the Heads of Delegation of the Co-Chair countries in the framework of the OSCE Almaty Foreign Ministers informal meeting on 17 July 2010, and

further reasserted in the Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries and the President of Azerbaijan and Armenia on 1 December 2010 in Astana. All of you witnessed Azerbaijan's refusal to make any reference in final documents of the Astana Summit to the above 5-partite Joint Statement, which was approved by the President of Azerbaijan earlier the same day. This pattern of inconsistency questions the credibility of Azerbaijan in the negotiation process.

Second, Armenia supports not only the above-mentioned three principles, but also six main elements that were presented as basis for negotiations in the statements of Presidents of the Co-Chair countries, Dmitri Medvedev, Barack Obama and Nikolas Sarkozy, in the frameworks of the G8 Summits in L'Aquila and Muskoka. According to the Co-Chairs, these principles and elements have been conceived as an integrated whole, and any attempt to select some elements over others would make it impossible to achieve a solution. Armenia fully shares this view and is ready to move towards the settlement on the basis of those principles and elements, which also reflect the position of entire international community, represented through mediators. Instead, Azerbaijan claims to be ready to hold discussions on the five out of six elements after the implementation of one of them, in fact, rejecting the presented package. By doing so, Azerbaijan fails to acknowledge that it is impossible to eliminate the consequences of war, imposed by Azerbaijan itself, without addressing the root cause of the conflict.

Third, Armenia has accepted the updated proposals presented in June in St. Petersburg, in October in Astrakhan and in December in Moscow, as a basis for negotiations aimed at the settlement of the conflict. It means that Armenia's position is in line with the approach of the international community. In the meanwhile, Azerbaijan is repeatedly introducing new amendments on a number of points, which have already been agreed on.

The Minsk Group Co-Chairs of the OSCE, which remain the only format internationally mandated to mediate, have done their best to push forward the negotiations. The next meeting of Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan will take place the day after tomorrow in Sochi by the initiative and in the presence of President Dmitri Medvedev, whose

efforts are supported by the leaders of other two Co-Chair countries – the USA and France. We want to believe that in Sochi Azerbaijan will show realism and political will and will say clear “YES” to the last proposals presented by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs. That would allow us to move forward in a constructive manner.

Thank you.