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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**In Response to H.E. the Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, President of the Committee of
Ministers of the Council of Europe
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1407th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

19 January, 2023

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes H.E. Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and thanks for the comprehensive address.

Armenia has always advocated stronger interactions between the Council of Europe and the OSCE through complimenting each other's efforts in strengthening the link between security and human rights.

Against the backdrop of the current security crisis and human suffering in the South Caucasus both the OSCE and the Council of Europe remain highly relevant organizations in shaping the collective efforts to maintain peace, security and stability through promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democracy.

The Government of Armenia is committed to the promotion of democracy through a comprehensive reform agenda aimed at strengthening the

respect for human rights and rule of law, consolidation of good governance and fight against corruption.

Excellency,

The 44-day war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and large scale aggression of 2022 against Armenia, which resulted in occupation of more than 140 square km of our sovereign territory and was accompanied by war crimes and unspeakable tortures of Armenian servicewomen, challenge and undermine the efforts towards establishing regional stability and security.

The anti-Armenian policy of hatred pursued by the top leadership of Azerbaijan, which is revealed also in a number of reports of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, unfortunately was intensified during and after the 2020 war of aggression.

Numerous cases of extrajudicial killings of Armenian servicemen and prisoners of war, as well as of civilians, including the elderly people, have been documented. Armenian captives were subjected to torture, inhuman and humiliating treatment. Moreover, Armenian POWs were deprived of their basic right to a fair trial during the sham court proceedings, considering the absence of an independent judiciary in Azerbaijan.

Armenia has continuously expressed its deep concern about the persistent hostile narrative of Azerbaijan against Armenians as an ethnic group, which is the clear violation by Azerbaijan of its Council of Europe accession commitments.

Moreover, Azerbaijan continues to disregard the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on the implementation of interim measures to provide information on Armenian hostages. In this regard practical measures are required to put pressure on Azerbaijan for the full and unconditional execution of judgements.

We would like to recall that the ECHR referred the case of non-compliance of Azerbaijan with the Court's interim measures to the Committee of Ministers. And we expect that under your guiding leadership the

Committee of Ministers will act upon its mandate and deliver on its responsibility.

Excellency,

Armenia was among the first countries who signed the Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property. Cultural heritage needs to be protected both at times of peace and war. Armenia is extremely concerned about the state of the Armenian cultural heritage in the territories that fell under Azerbaijani control in the aftermath of the 2020 war. Azerbaijan is still rejecting the deployment of UNESCO fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories.

We recall that the protection of the cultural heritage has been among the priorities of a number of previous Committee of Ministers' Chairmanships, and we hope and expect that a due attention will be paid to the issue of protection of the Armenian cultural heritage also through its respective Group of Rapporteurs.

Distinguished Minister,

Armenia welcomed the thematic focus of the previous Chairmanship of Ireland of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of human rights in the most challenging context of conflicts. We remain hopeful that Iceland will build upon the outcomes of the previous Chairmanships and will pay due attention to the protection of human rights in all area of its responsibility including so called "**grey zones**". Being the watchdog of human rights, the Council of Europe should be more engaged in dealing with the human rights aspect of the conflicts.

By saying this, I recall the preplanned humanitarian crisis with far going intentions created by Azerbaijan due to the blockade of the Lachin corridor.

It is more than a month that 120 000 people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) are under illegal blockade. Deliberate and continuous interruptions of the gas supply in freezing winter conditions, followed by ongoing disruptions of the electricity and telecommunication lines in the

entire territory of Nagorno-Karabakh are vivid evidence of pre-planned actions of the Azerbaijani authorities. The danger of famine is looming.

The International community cannot stand by and watch how people are slowly starving to death. In this context, we would like to thank you, Excellency, as a President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for expressing concern about the increasing precarious humanitarian situation of the people living in Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of month long blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan and calling to quickly restore freedom of movement along the corridor to avoid further deterioration of the situation.

We also appreciate the targeted positions of OSCE participating States urging Azerbaijan to immediately and without preconditions lift the blockade. However, it is time to act. We believe that under current circumstances it is imperative to send an international fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and the Lachin Corridor to assess the humanitarian situation on the ground, as well as to ensure unhindered humanitarian access to Nagorno-Karabakh for CoE monitoring bodies.

Excellency,

I should recall that upon accession to the Council of Europe Azerbaijan agreed to honour several specific commitments among them I quote “to continue efforts to settle the conflict by peaceful means only” and to settle international disputes by peaceful means resolutely rejecting any threat or use of force against its neighbours. So my question is what the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe intends to do in view of such flagrant violation of commitments by one of its member states?

In closing, we hope that the 4th Council of Europe Summit of the Heads of State and Government to be held under Iceland's Chairmanship will pay due attention to the issues related to human rights and security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Excellency, we wish every success to Iceland in leading the Organization and pledge our full support to your endeavours.

Thank you.