



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

**Statement**

**In response to the address by the Special Representative  
of the European Union for the  
South Caucasus, Ambassador Peter Semneby  
Delivered by Ambassador Jivan Tabibian  
At the 716<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council  
June 12, 2008**

Please allow us to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Semneby, with whom we have been crossing paths for a long time, both in the OSCE and elsewhere. It is very interesting that he is more frequently in Armenia than I am. We run into each other in all kinds of other places as well: in Brussels, Bled and Vienna. Ambassador Semneby is a very-very busy man taking care of as he calls “situations” with some volatility.

We would like to emphasize the part of his address that suggests that the area of the South Caucasus, to use his own words, is of a “strategic importance to the EU”. We think that all good relations depend on the realization that there are interests on both sides. Sometimes there is a tendency among some situations such as in Armenia and its neighbors, to assume that the interest on the part of the others in their region is either charitable or due purely to the desire to influence or control. We believe it is better to think of our relations as mutually enlightened self interest. It is important to see that the EU indeed enjoys some benefits from a stable, let alone prosperous Southern Caucasus. There was a time when whenever the EU showed interest in some area, people started to think it was only for markets. In our case it is not simply because of the market, which is so far relatively insignificant in Armenia. But essentially it is the political stability on the borders of the EU. On the other hand let us be very realistic. The EU does not have the same leverage in the Southern Caucasus that it has enjoyed and used very effectively in the Balkans and in South East Europe. One reason is that the power and the leverage of prospects of membership are essentially very different from inducements in the form of promises of cooperative carrots, no matter how big the carrot, even though in an intermediate phase it is dangled, not instantly consumed. That is why the EU has a challenge in the Caucasus: how to engage, motivate, influence, cooperate with a region whose prospects are right now not on the radar screen. We see how quickly the Southeastern European countries are able, no matter what their difficulties, to be encouraged and motivated to cooperate with the EU on a different level.

Let us just refer to two points that Ambassador Semneby has raised. The first was conflicts and the other, democratization. On the conflicts we have two very brief comments. It is very interesting whether they are “frozen”, “below boiling” or “simmering”; all these phrases very interestingly seem related to temperature. That may be all right, because it sort of projects on to outside reality the experience of our poor bodies. We believe the US phrase “unresolved” is technically more accurate in terms of their status. But for the sake of kind of a more dynamic image, please allow

us to propose a word we have used before about these conflicts as essentially “protracted” conflicts. They are unresolved, seeking resolution, but the nature of the processes they have been going through, some of them for a very long time, show that there is no linear way out of these situations in the immediate future. The second thing we have to remember about these conflicts is that over the years based on our observations, the EU’s perceptions of the dynamics of these conflicts have changed simply because of the changing vantage points of the EU, given the evolution of the larger geopolitical relationships in the world at large but specifically within the OSCE area. The EU has not been at some fixed constant point for the last ten years from which it has seen those conflicts in an unchanging perspective. The EU’s very vantage point is shifting, because its relationship with much larger areas is also continuously shifting.

About Nagorno Karabakh. Ambassador Semneby is right. Complacency would be rather dangerous; he is right, there is a situation which at any time can erupt, he is right that economic conditions and economic resources affect the perception of these conflicts.

But, let us simply conclude by saying the following: the premise that Ambassador Semneby used, we would like to pose as a paradox. He said very correctly, related to the issue of democracy that legitimate governments with their strength can play more positive role in the resolution of a conflict. In theory that is absolutely correct, in reality however, one can stand that notion on its head. Sometimes governments are seen as legitimate, and are even the result of legitimate processes, because of their intransigence. That is the trap in which some in our region have fallen. First by building up the idea that if one is a true authentic patriot, believes in his own values, was resisting the usurping enemy, therefore one is ipso facto legitimate because one is intransigent. One should decouple the question of legitimacy from the question of being strong enough to make compromises. We have seen around the World, not just in the Caucasus, cases of the exact opposite. No matter how legitimately and democratically elected a government is, and perhaps we should say this also to our dear friend Ambassador Strohal, we have to be very careful not to slide from an electoral democracy into a plebiscitary *carte blanche*, where the issue of intransigence may play a major role.

We think Ambassador Semneby’s analysis of Armenia’s political situation is the analysis of the EU. We have heard it, we have sometimes agreed with it, we have sometimes contested it, and we have often responded to it. About domestic matters we will put this in a simple way: dialogue is a good idea. The problem always is finding the interlocutors with whom to dialogue in good faith.

Thank you very much for your attention, Ambassador Semneby, and we hope you will find our views helpful in continuing your work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.