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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

Statement

in Response to the Address of Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus and Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, H.E. Ioannis Kasoulides delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1129th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council January 26, 2017

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to warmly welcome H.E. Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus and Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and express our gratitude for his interesting and comprehensive address.

Before going to the agenda of cooperation between Council of Europe and the OSCE we would like to stress the high level of cooperation between Armenia and Cyprus, based on millennia old traditions of neighborhood and friendship and shared values between our peoples.

The firm stance of Cyprus for the realization of the right to the truth and the protection of rights of people who were subject of mass atrocities including genocide earned well-deserved respect and acknowledgement.

One of the key areas of activities of the OSCE and the Council of Europe is promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democracy, as important cornerstones for peace, security and cooperation.

We welcome willingness and readiness of the Council of Europe to cooperate with the OSCE and its institutions. Here we would like to particularly mention positive interaction of the Council of Europe with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the ODIHR. Such cooperation should be based on mutual utilization of comparative advantage of our organizations and avoiding unnecessary duplication of activities.

Among such advantages of the Council of Europe is its experience in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination. Nowadays violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism are direct threats to our values, peace and security in Europe.

Armenia has been vocal in condemning hate speech and xenophobia, especially its use by public figures and leaders in the political discourse. Combating these phenomena have been a priority for Armenia during our Chairmanship at the Committee of Ministers and it continues to remain as such.

We highly value the activities of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance in combating intolerance and hate crimes. The reports of the ECRI

reflect real problems in the sphere of extremism, racism, radicalization and hate crimes and provide clear-cut recommendations to address current challenges. Those reports can serve as guidance to our institutions particularly ODIHR for identifying those notable hate crimes which may represent threat to the security in the OSCE area.

Another avenue of cooperation between our Organizations could be promoting the human rights of people residing in conflict areas. It is the primary goal of the Council of Europe to safeguard common values and individual rights at pan-European level. Both the Council of Europe and the OSCE executive structures and institutions should have outreach to the conflict areas with the aim to protect and address human rights of people and strengthen their democratic institutions and rule of law.

In this regard, we stress our support to the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship in making needs of populations affected by conflicts the primary goal of our political efforts. We hope that the Council of Europe will also continue to streamline in its agenda ensuring human rights in conflict zones. OSCE and Council of Europe can effectively cooperate in this field with the aim to make sure that there are no any areas of exclusion when it comes to enjoying human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This access is even more important amid grave violations of humanitarian and human rights as it was the case during the recent large scale military offensive against people of Nagorno-Karabakh, which led to numerous atrocities and forceful displacement of thousands of people.

Mr. Minister,

We support priorities of the Cyprus Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, in particular those related to protection of cultural property and reaction to offences against it. My Delegation has regularly raised in the OSCE the issue of illegal expropriation of religious property under the pretext of combating terrorism. Smuggling of cultural heritage of Syria by foreign terrorist fighters is another important challenge, which needs to be addressed.

Mr. Minister,

In conclusion, we would also like to wish every success to Cyprus in leading the Organization and pledge our full support to the Cypriot Chairmanship in its endeavours.

Thank you.