



**Statement by H.E. Mr. Victor Biyagov,
Permanent and Plenipotentiary Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the
Collective Security Treaty Organization
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation Security Dialogue on Regional Security
Arrangements: Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)
9 June 2021**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset I would like to extend my gratitude to the Armenian FSC Chairmanship for its initiative to hold the Security Dialogue on Regional Security Arrangements, namely Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). I am honored to be part of this discussion.

Today we live in a world where growing challenges continue to undermine security and stability. No state can alone address current security challenges. Therefore, organizations which pursue common goals of strengthening peace, security and stability can be instrumental in assisting the States to confront these challenges. Today's meeting provides a good opportunity to discuss the synergies between the CSTO and the OSCE and assess how these organizations can contribute to the promotion and consolidation of comprehensive and indivisible security in the OSCE area.

Mr. Chairman,

Now allow me briefly to present Armenia-CSTO co-operation agenda and given the fact that next year Armenia will assume the CSTO chairmanship I believe the OSCE participating States would be interested to get acquainted with the general priorities of the Armenian chairmanship.

Armenia is a founding member of the CSTO, which we consider as one of the main components of the security system of Armenia. The cooperation in this framework has

three layers: foreign policy coordination, military cooperation, as well as cooperation in the sphere of countering challenges and threats. Armenia attaches equal importance to all of them which increases our level of security and enables us to reach two main objectives:

First, further enhance our bilateral cooperation with the CSTO member states,

Second, pursue sustainable development of the Organization and continuous integration, based on its relevant provisions and objectives.

Armenia actively participates in all events within the framework of the Organization. In the context of the development of the military component of the CSTO, various military trainings are held annually on the territories of the member states of the Organization to coordinate the interaction and interoperability of the CSTO troops. This year special training with the formations of special forces of the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Forces "Grom-2021" are to be held on the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Earlier this month staff negotiations on the preparation of it were held in Yerevan. The event took place in accordance with the Plan for joint training of the command and control bodies and formations of the assets of the CSTO collective security system for 2021.

Next year Armenia will be assuming the chairmanship of the CSTO. Currently we are in the process of finalizing our chairmanship priorities, therefore at this stage I may share with you three main goals and objectives that we seek to achieve.

First, Armenia will focus on ensuring the collective interests of the CSTO member States,

Second, we will take relevant measures to promote the implementation of CSTO 2025 strategy which was adopted in 2016 at the October session of the Collective Security Council in Yerevan.

To this end it is important to stress that the CSTO 2025 Strategy identifies the concept of further strengthening the total potential of the CSTO in ensuring peace and security in the vast Eurasian region in close cooperation and dialogue with all partners who share the goals and principles of the CSTO.

Third, Armenia will explore avenues to further strengthen security and stability in the area of responsibility of the CSTO in line with the purposes and goals of the Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

Today we live in uncertain times. The world faces an unprecedented health crisis which impacts literally all aspects of our lives. Despite the call and need for joint actions to counter COVID-19 pandemic, we witness further deepening of dividing lines and exacerbation of conflicts and crisis situations. The gradual weakness of multilateralism during the recent years has created even deeper security gaps and challenges which if left unaddressed are fraught with unpredictable consequences for the regional as well as global peace and stability.

We like it or not, but we cannot shy away from acknowledging that the security, peace, and stability in the OSCE and CSTO area is being challenged like never before. The very idea of the organizations dealing with security has been inadmissibility of war and use of force and promotion of peace, security and stability.

In the midst of the pandemic and despite the call of the UN Secretary General for the global ceasefire on September 27, 2020 Azerbaijan launched a war of aggression against the Republic of Artsakh with the direct support and involvement of Turkey and Turkish affiliated foreign terrorist fighters relocated from Syria and elsewhere. Azerbaijan during the 44-day war, in clear defiance of its international obligations and despite three ceasefire agreements brokered by Russia, France and the United States, continued its offensive using tanks, combat helicopters and aircraft, heavy artillery, UAVs, missiles and multiple rocket launchers, prohibited cluster and white phosphorus munitions.

Moreover, Turkish F-16 fighters and Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 combat drones, 3 deployed in Azerbaijan under the pretext of a joint Turkish-Azerbaijani military exercise, were actively used.

Throughout 44 days of the offensive, in a flagrant violation of international law and Geneva Conventions of 1949, Azerbaijani army deliberately and systematically targeted civilian infrastructures, including schools, hospitals, maternity wards, markets, roads, communication systems and other facilities, as well as vandalized and destroyed the Armenian cultural and religious heritage on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, including churches, cross-stones and various monuments. Azerbaijan's massive use of force led to thousands of casualties, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and

thousands of displaced in Nagorno-Karabakh. These are facts, confirmed by numerous independent investigations and international watchdogs.

The trilateral statement on ceasefire signed on 9 November 2020 put an end to the 44-day aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh and its people. However, in defiance of their commitments, the Azerbaijani authorities continue to violate a number of key provisions of the trilateral statement. Despite numerous calls from the international community, Azerbaijan continues to conceal the true number of the prisoners, denying the captivity of dozens of Armenian servicemen and civilians. Azerbaijan continues to use the Armenian prisoners of war as political hostages, subjecting them to torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and psychological pressure. Azerbaijan has brought trumped-up criminal charges against 16 captured Armenian servicemen, which also violates the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020. All Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives held in Azerbaijan must be immediately released and repatriated without any preconditions.

Unfortunately, the lack of a tough reaction to the actions of Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh encouraged that country to pursue the same policy toward the Republic of Armenia in an attempt to occupy border areas and deprive the local population of its livelihood.

As you already know the Azerbaijani military continue their illegal presence in the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia since May 12 and maintain their provocative actions in a number of directions. As result of provocative actions of the Azerbaijani armed forces, an Armenian soldier was fatally wounded while on duty in the immediate vicinity of the village of Verin Shorzha in Armenia's Gegharkunik Province. On May 27, six Armenian servicemen who had been carrying out engineering work in the border area of the Gegharkunik province of the Republic of Armenia, were surrounded and captured by Azerbaijani soldiers.

On May 14, for the first time in the history of the Organization, Armenia invoked article 2 of the Collective Security Treaty in order to hold consultations and coordinate the positions of the CSTO member states and take measures to counter this threat. The consultations with our allies are aimed, first and foremost, to prevent further escalation in the region.

In this regard, I would like to reaffirm Armenia's position to solve this issue through diplomatic-political means. Nevertheless, having said that, Armenia is determined to ensure its territorial integrity by all necessary means if the Azerbaijani authorities decide not to act in a constructive manner and pull back their forces from the sovereign territories of Armenia.

Mr. Chairman,

After all, it is possible to effectively address the existing, newly emerging and constantly growing challenges and threats only together on the basis of mutual trust and respect for international law. Our mutual commitments assumed within the CSTO should be unequivocally respected, and the member states interests should be seen as a priority. In this we see our collective strength, and in this is the prerequisite for the development of our Organization. We are deeply convinced that "collective security" can be provided only through targeted and coordinated work of all international organizations that have a huge potential.

Last but not least current situation in the world, as well as in the CSTO and the OSCE areas of responsibility, requires enhanced cooperation in all dimensions of the security to counter existing and emerging threats. I would like to conclude by responding to the question posed in the concept note of today's Security Dialogue 'Which security threats require closer co-operation between the two organizations?' I believe it is important to expand interaction and closer co-operate in the field of cybersecurity, and in the fight against terrorism. I see a niche in using the comparative advantages and competences of both Organizations in addressing these issues.

I believe that cooperation of the CSTO with the OSCE on issues of mutual interest can be instrumental in overcoming the security crisis, build confidence, trust and consolidate peace security and stability.

Thank you for your attention.