



ԵԱՀԿ ՌԻՄ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄՇՏԱԿԱՆ ՆԵՐԿԱՅԱՑՈՒՑՉՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**in response to the address by the
Secretary General of the Council of Europe
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1419th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

20 April 2023

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Secretary General Pejčinović, I would like to warmly welcome you back to the Permanent Council and thank you for your address.

The regular exchange in the Permanent Council of the OSCE with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe is indeed important against the backdrop of the current security and humanitarian crises in Europe in general and in our region in particular. 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.

As it has been stressed on various occasions further promotion of targeted and result oriented cooperation between the Council of Europe and OSCE is of particular importance with the view of developing synergies and avoiding duplication in the context of our two Organizations' *acquis* on the thematic issues, which reflect their different yet complementary mandates and working methods. We should give due consideration to these issues to further enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of two organisations.

At the same time the potential of cooperation between the OSCE and CoE has not been fully utilized. In our view their wide toolbox should be applied in a combined way through further promotion of human rights for the establishment of a European community based on indivisible human security.

Madame Secretary General,

Since your last appearance at the Permanent Council in June last year much has changed in our region and the situation on the ground, unfortunately, continues to further deteriorate.

On 13-14 September, 2022 Azerbaijan unleashed unprovoked aggression against sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia. Azerbaijani armed forces deliberately targeted civilian infrastructures and peaceful settlements. This has been the third large-scale offensive against Armenia since the signing of the trilateral statement of 9 November, 2020. This aggression resulted in occupation of sovereign territory of Armenia and 233 casualties, including among civilians. During this aggression Azerbaijani armed forces committed war crimes, extrajudicial killings, subjected Armenian military personnel, including women, to the most shocking and horrific humiliation and torture.

It has been almost four months now that Azerbaijan blocked the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia and the outer world and keeps 120 000 Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) under effective siege. Azerbaijan has also disrupted the electricity and the gas supply. As a result, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan is announcing at the highest level that it can lift the blockade for all those who want to leave Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as demands the people of Nagorno-Karabakh either to accept Azerbaijani rule or leave. It becomes clear that the ultimate objective of Azerbaijan is to subject the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to ethnic cleansing.

Of course, we appreciate, Madame Secretary General, the concern that you expressed for the humanitarian situation around Lachin Corridor. We also appreciate the targeted positions of those OSCE participating States, who urged Azerbaijan to immediately and without precondition lift the blockade. Despite these calls, and, most importantly, despite the order issued by the ICJ on 22 February 2023 to Azerbaijan to ensure the free and unimpeded passage through the Lachin Corridor, Azerbaijan continues the unlawful and illegitimate blockade in breach of principles of the international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and the legally binding ICJ Order.

In the atmosphere of total impunity, on April 11, Azerbaijan unleashed another provocation and aggression against the territorial integrity of Armenia which resulted in four casualties and six injured from the Armenian side.

Madam Secretary General,

The Council of Europe has extensive monitoring capacities in the area of elimination of racial discrimination and countering hate speech. The reports by the ECRI provide an insight and help outline the scope of this problem, while the specific recommendations provide important guidance to member states in their efforts to meet their relevant commitments.

The numerous reports by ECRI revealed the already entrenched anti-Armenian hatred and xenophobic trends in Azerbaijan and, regrettably, we should state that these trends only intensified, especially after the 2020 war of aggression, with the anti-Armenian policy of hatred and warmongering, derogatory rhetoric used by the top leadership of Azerbaijan becoming new normal.

The horrible result of this decades long anti-Armenian discriminatory indoctrination became evident during the 44-day war of aggression and subsequent aggressions against the sovereign territory of Armenia, when numerous cases of blatant violations of international humanitarian law, such as extrajudicial killings of Armenian servicemen and prisoners of war, as well as of civilians, including the elderly people, have been documented. Armenian captives, including women, were subjected to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, in some cases they were beheaded and their bodies mutilated.

Armenian POWs were deprived of their basic right to a fair trial during the sham court proceedings, in light of the absence of an independent judiciary in Azerbaijan. 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 PoWs and hostages.

We are also 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. In this context, we recall the resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the “Humanitarian consequences of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan/Nagorno-Karabakh conflict” and expect that due attention will be paid to the issue of protection of the Armenian cultural heritage.

Madam Secretary General,

The Council of Europe was established in pursuit of ideas of peace and justice. And countries upon their accession undertake commitments to honour this. Specifically, in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the accession commitment of Azerbaijan is to continue efforts to settle the conflict by peaceful means only by resolutely rejecting any threatened use of force against its neighbours. Waging the war of aggression against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and on a daily basis using threat or use of force is a clear violation by Azerbaijan of its Council of Europe accession commitments. So, my question is what kind of steps the Council of Europe intends to take or taking to make Azerbaijan to respect its commitments?

Taking into account that it is planned to hold a Council of Europe Summit next month, we expect that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and aggression of Azerbaijan against Armenia will be duly reflected in the Summit documents. We believe that the Summit needs to have an inclusive and comprehensive final document - immune from politicised or geopolitical

considerations. We also believe that the human rights of the people residing in conflict areas should be addressed without discrimination. The need for peace and stability is long overdue for our region. In this context the upcoming Summit is an important milestone to reach out to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and send a strong political message for durable peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Since I have the floor, Mr. Chair, I would like to make a few remarks in response to the Azerbaijani delegation.

With regard to the incident that occurred during the opening ceremony of the European Weightlifting Championship in Yerevan, Armenia, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia made a statement, and I quote: “we are seriously concerned with the incident with the national flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan during the opening ceremony of the championship on April 14. The incident, which was immediately resolved during the ceremony and in no way interfered with the natural course of events, does not reflect the position of the Republic of Armenia authorities and deserves to be condemned in terms of sports values and universal principles”. The statement will be distributed to the delegations.

The claims of the Azerbaijani delegate that the person who has been engaged in this incident has been glorified, are nothing short of a blatant lie. We resolutely reject these claims. This person was not glorified in any way, he did not receive a hero welcome by the president of Armenia and was not awarded, unlike what happened in Azerbaijan in case of Ramil Safarov, Azerbaijani murderer who axed an Armenian officer in his sleep and was sentenced to lifetime imprisonment by an EU member state court.

As to the case of Azerbaijani soldiers, who infiltrated Armenia and were apprehended by civilians, it is suffice to recall that the Prosecutor General of Armenia opened a case, and this case is under investigation. In the process of this investigation it has been revealed that one of Azerbaijani soldiers, named Huseyn Ahliman oglu Akhundov, deliberately and brutally murdered a civilian, the guard of the local copper mining company. After the murder, he stole the victim's mobile phone and other personal possessions, then recorded a video, saying “[...] thanks to God, we successfully reached Armenia and beheaded 400 to 500 Armenians; we are not traitors and hope to return to Azerbaijan successfully [...]”.

This delegation will reflect later on this appalling crime committed by the Azerbaijani soldier, who infiltrated Armenia.

As a final word, distinguished Secretary General, we really enjoy the cooperation with the Council of Europe, and intend to continue our fruitful cooperation with you and with your able staff in Strasbourg. With this, I wish you every success in all your future endeavors.

ANNEX

Statement of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia

As the host of the European Weightlifting Championships 2023, we are seriously concerned with the incident with the national flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan during the opening ceremony of the championship on April 14. The incident, which was immediately resolved during the ceremony and in no way interfered with the natural course of events, does not reflect the position of the Republic of Armenia authorities and deserves to be condemned in terms of sports values and universal principles of fair play.

At the same time, we regret the decision of the Azerbaijani team to leave the championship and add that there were no security problems, because the Government of the Republic of Armenia initially provided and continues to provide all security standards for delegations participating in the championship. The Government was committed to earlier commitments to provide additional security measures for Azerbaijani athletes. The evidence of this is that for almost two days the Azerbaijani athletes were safe in Armenia, and following the decision to leave the championship, the relevant services ensured their safe departure.

In preparation for this championship, the Republic of Armenia has carried out large-scale work and significant investments. The conditions of accommodation, training, competition, technical support, television coverage, and the unprecedented opening ceremony received the highest appraisal from our international partners. According to numerous protocols, the European Championship, held in Armenia, by its organization can confidently compete with the organization of the world championships. We are sure that after the tournament, we will be able to state that Armenia can apply for the organization of larger tournaments, including the World Cup.