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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 March 2011

**In response to the statement by Mr. Edward Nalbandyan,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome to today's meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council Mr. Edward Agvanovich Nalbandyan, the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, a country which we regard as a friend.

The people of Russia and Armenia have for centuries been joined by close fraternal ties. We have a shared and long-standing history of good-neighbourly coexistence within a single State. We cannot therefore be indifferent to the fate of the Armenian people or indeed to the fate of the other peoples living in the Trans-Caucasus, which is close to us not only territorially but also historically.

We have listened with great interest to the statement by the distinguished minister regarding current issues in Armenian foreign policy and would like to share some thoughts on the problems affecting our common interests and the interests of all the participating States of our Organization.

We are referring primarily to the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh, to the protracted conflict involving two States with whom Russia enjoys friendly relations, a conflict to which so far, unfortunately, a worthy solution has not yet been found.

Some people believe that the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement process is deadlocked because of differences in the positions taken by the parties to the conflict. Some people even call into question the effectiveness of the work of the OSCE Minsk Group.

We categorically disagree with this. We just have to take last year, which, in our view, was fairly productive in this connection. Thanks, among other things, to Russian initiatives, work has continued on the basic principles for a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement. Three trilateral summit meetings have been organized with the personal involvement of the President of Russia, Mr. Dmitry Medvedev. Three rounds of negotiations involving the ministers for foreign affairs of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia have been held. This practice

has been continued this year as well. During these meetings, it has been possible to reach an understanding on the acceptability of the majority of the additions proposed by Azerbaijan and Armenia to the draft principles. Differences of opinion have been resolved as regards certain fundamental questions. It is our hope that the next trilateral summit scheduled to take place in Sochi on 5 March of this year will secure this positive trend.

On the margins of the OSCE Summit in Astana, the heads of the delegations of Russia, the United States of America, France, Azerbaijan and Armenia adopted a joint statement on a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, in which they set out a number of its basic principles.

I believe there is no need to go into details here about the work of the OSCE Minsk Group. In November of last year, we heard in the Permanent Council a report by the Co-Chairs on the work done by the Group. At that time, their activities received a positive assessment by the participating States. We are now awaiting a report on the results of the assessment mission carried out by the Co-Chairs in October 2010. We hope that it will be substantive and objective.

Recently, the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group met with the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan. During these conversations, primary attention was focused on support by the parties for recent initiatives of the Co-Chairs.

We should like to take this opportunity to once again highlight a number of points of principle in our approach to a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement.

Russia's position is consistent and remains unchanged. We are against imposing any solutions on the parties to the conflict from the outside. In this connection, we take the position that the main responsibility for the final choice of a settlement option must rest with Azerbaijan and Armenia. Russia is ready to support the solution option that will work for all the parties involved, and in the event of a compromise agreement being reached will act as a guarantor for the settlement. A solution that will prevent the region from being turned into an arena of politico-military rivalry and make it possible to return stability and calm to the Trans-Caucasus is, in our view, vital.

As a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, which, in our opinion, must remain the principal negotiation platform in the settlement process, we are ready to do all we can, also within a bilateral format, to help the parties move closer to the long-awaited settlement.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the distinguished minister every success in his difficult work for the peace and prosperity of Armenia and the stability of the region as a whole.

Thank you for your attention.