

**Speech by Minister Elmar Mammadyarov at the 20th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council**

05.12.2013

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Mr. Chairman,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to join previous colleagues in congratulating H.E. Mr. Leonid Kozhara and his entire team for effectively leading the Ukrainian Chairmanship of the OSCE and for the excellent organization of the 20th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council.

I am also glad to welcome our distinguished colleague from Switzerland, H.E. Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Vice-President of the Swiss Federal Council and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs as the incoming Chairperson-in-Office and wish him every success in his future endeavors.

Excellences,

Azerbaijan attaches the utmost importance to fully utilizing the OSCE's comparative advantage of being the only regional body with such a unique comprehensive security concept as well as broad and diverse membership. It is our conviction that dialogue and respect for undiminishing value of the Helsinki guiding principles of 1975 are the imperatives for realizing the core functions of OSCE.

In this regard we commend the Ukrainian Chairmanship for launching discussions within the Helsinki+40 process and effectively guiding it. Azerbaijan hopes that the Roadmap suggested by the incoming Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships will provide an ample opportunity to register progress in most problematic areas such as resolution of protracted conflicts and arms control.

Experience of Azerbaijan in the United Nations Security Council and our collective efforts with partner nations proved that dialogue and cooperation, based on full respect to the norms and principles of international law, is a best remedy to restore trust and stabilize volatile political and security environment.

We are convinced that establishment of a genuine OSCE security community without achieving substantive results on these tracks is hardly possible. The issue of illegal deployments of troops and heavy arms in the occupied territories of OSCE participating States are the major causes for ineffectiveness and gradual failure of existing arms control regimes. It is obvious that one cannot succeed in establishing fair, verifiable and predictable arms control mechanisms without demilitarizing the conflict affected territories.

Confidence and security building measures cannot be taken out of the overall political and security context, in particular when conflict affected territories are viewed as an area of application. The assumption that CSBMs and regional cooperation in itself has a potential of resolving a conflict when political and security consequences of the conflict have not been properly addressed, is utopian.

OSCE field presences and institutions are important assets for assisting participating States to strengthen security cooperation and to implement commitments they have undertaken. In the meantime, it is embarrassing when an OSCE institution based just on its technical mandate and expertise albeit without proper knowledge of political and security environment as well as in absence of coordination with OSCE's Chairmanship and Secretary General, delivers official statement on behalf of the Organizations on a political matter such as election monitoring results. Therefore we believe that reviewing the role of ODIHR in election processes should be a part of the Helsinki+40 process.

We highly appreciate the OSCE Ukrainian Chairmanship's invitation extended to the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States to attend the OSCE Ministerial Meeting. As a chairman-in-Office of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States we believe that participation of our organization as a regional cooperation mechanism in the work of the OSCE will contribute to the achievement of the goals shared by both of these two organizations.

Mr. Chairman,

A meeting between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan took place last month in Vienna. After the meeting of two Presidents and in accordance with their instructions, me and Foreign Minister Nalbandyan together with the co-chairs as well as separately start intensive consultations on the ways how to move beyond the unacceptable status-quo in the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the near future.

Honorable delegations in this hall are well aware about the position of Azerbaijan, which is based on four resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, guiding principles of the Helsinki Final Act and relevant OSCE documents.

Azerbaijan believes that basic principles as they reflected in the joint statement of the presidents of Minsk Group co-chairmen countries in L'Aquila in 2009 and then reconfirmed in their other respected statements on this issue could serve as a basis for opening substantive talks on comprehensive peace agreement.

Such a comprehensive peace agreement will envisage implementation of practical measures, where every step will dictate the next one and will be based on certain timeframes and the preceding elements. It will include all reasonable CSBMs starting with the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the seven occupied districts surrounding Nagorno Karabakh, providing security guarantees for the population accompanied by reopening of borders as well as communications and gradually bringing both - Armenian and Azerbaijani communities closer to each other. These steps will allow accommodating concerns and interests of two sides also setting them in one consistent process monitored, assessed and guided on a regular basis by the international community.

We are convinced that the biggest threat to the peace, security and sustainable development in the region is the presence of the Armenian military forces on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. We firmly believe that demilitarization of the conflict zone will bring more room for engagement on all possible tracks, create more confidence between both parties as well as between both communities of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan and decrease military rhetoric along with tensions in the region.

I call on the Armenian leadership to demonstrate a constructive approach for achieving a breakthrough in the negotiations and give its agreement to start together with co-chairs of the Minsk Group substantive talks on Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Thank you.