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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**in response to Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov,
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
as delivered by Ambassador Armen Papikyan
at the 1431st meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

06 July 2023

Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of Armenia warmly welcomes the High Commissioner Kairat Abdrakhmanov back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for the comprehensive report.

We concur with the view, High Commissioner, that social cohesion starts with designing inclusive legislation and policies and building accountable and responsible institutions that maintain effective consultation mechanisms to address the issues of national minorities.

Guided by this understanding and being a strong supporter of the universality of human rights, Armenia promotes minority rights in the framework of the overall democratization of the society. Protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, preservation of their language and cultural heritage are among the priorities of Armenia. The Government of Armenia is convinced that political, social, cultural and economic participation is key to empowering national minorities and promoting their inclusive integration into society.

In line with this approach, four seats in the National Assembly of Armenia are assigned to four major national minorities - Yazidis, Russians, Assyrians and Kurds. Particular attention is paid to the access to minority language education in schools. I should recall that Yazidis are the largest minority group in Armenia, and we are pleased that in 2019 the world's largest temple of this ancient people was inaugurated in Armenia.

Mr. Chairperson,

Armenia is deeply concerned that national, as well as religious and ethnic groups are increasingly becoming targets of hate speech, violence, and atrocities, are being used as scapegoats by authoritarian regimes in the states that have an abysmal human rights record, where the rights of the majority rights are also systematically suppressed and violated.

History knows a number of cases when once indigenous peoples are gradually reduced to a minority group in their own homeland with a subsequent and complete extermination. Our history is telling a story about that. Regretfully these trends continue in our days in other places and an entire indigenous population faces similar threats and is on the verge of extermination.

Therefore, particular attention should be paid to such countries where the notions of the so-called multiculturalism, *we just heard*, serve as pretext for covering up human rights violations and negligence of the fundamental freedoms. In this regard, we believe that Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations should be further developed with a view to taking more robust action against the backdrop of continuous unlawful suppression and violation of the rights of national or ethnic minorities by some states.

And since I have the floor, I would like to briefly react to the statement made by the representative of Azerbaijan.

It is very telling that 120 000 people are currently under the siege by the militaries of Azerbaijan whom Azerbaijan is trying to govern or “reintegrate”. This is exactly what we are talking about when we refer to the abysmal human rights record. The problem is that even in Azerbaijan they cannot protect the basic human rights of their own population. Now they claim that they are able to protect or promote the rights of Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. And I recall that Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are living in their own ancestral land.

And last but not least, we call on HCNM to take into account interests and sensitivities of all participating States in designing and implementing projects, particularly those which may have conflict related context and might be perceived as legitimization of massive use of force.

In closing, High Commissioner Abdrakhmanov, we wish you every success in your endeavours in fulfilling your mandate.

I thank you.