

Statement of H. E. Mr. Vartan Oskanian

ENGLISH only

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Republic of Armenia

OSCE 15<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Council

November 29, 2007

Madrid, Spain

Mr. Chairman, Dear Colleagues,

It's already the end of the day, let me briefly address a few topics. One related to OSCE reforms. Second, CFE; Third, a little bit about Armenia's elections and finally about the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. But before all that, let me commend the Spanish chairmanship for the very good work they've done during the year.

Although the organization has been evolving ever since its inception, we have really changed in this last half decade. Some of those changes, intended to enhance the effectiveness of the organization, appear sometimes to burden its structures, and sometimes even disturb the delicate balance among the various components of what we still believe is a correct premise – that security is indivisible.

The OSCE's three dimensions have provided each of us with something to hang on to. Today the equilibrium among our three pillars begins to wobble because of the centrifugal effect of so much criss-crossing of priorities and interests. There's an uncomfortable shift in balance.

This is why Armenia does not think reform should be taboo nor do we consider the reform process a wasteful exercise. The Herald Tribune even raised these points this morning. No large, complex organization, private or public, can maintain its relevance and improve its performance simply by assuming that all is well. At the OSCE, our greatest challenge is to alter the experience of some delegations who find that the playing field is uneven. An organization based on consensus presumably believes in a level playing field. It is not a matter of being and feeling equal, rather of having an equal right to defend our interests.

Because this unevenness becomes more apparent and more problematic at the level of institutions and missions, believing in enhancing ODIHR's autonomy and effectiveness, we have attempted to seek in ODIHR greater evenhandedness, transparency, non-selectivity, and region-blindness particularly in its election-related activities.

As for OSCE missions, Armenia has already raised the issue, secure in the very satisfactory, beneficial and cooperative performance of the office in Yerevan. But we believe that as their numbers, mandates and operations evolve, the whole missions system needs an adjustment to reduce the perception of favorite tracks and sometimes quasi-permanent dependency. The ultimate benefit of any mission will be

evident when that mission, having completed its work, makes itself redundant. That is why we emphasize capacity building as the next priority for the Yerevan office.

Mr. Chairman, as I reflect on the priorities of the organization as a whole, I must address the CFE, a foundational issue and one that plays an important role in the edifice of military strategic security for the area. Presently it is in trouble. We are a state party and the effective functioning of a Treaty in full implementation is essential to our national security. Frankly, we are deeply concerned by our neighbor Azerbaijan blatantly and unapologetically exceeding by substantial numbers its holdings of TLEs. It is in this sense that the reinvigoration of the CFE and its adapted successor is vital for all state parties.

Mr. Chairman,

It seems our whole region is getting ready for an electoral year. In Armenia, we concluded parliamentary elections in May and scored quite a satisfactory rating in the eyes of the international community. My government has every intention to maintain the momentum in the Presidential elections coming in February. These, at a time when Armenia is socially, economically a new country and we are seeing the return of hope and optimism.

Mr. Chairman,

Finally, something on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

On the one hand, through successive meetings of Presidents and Foreign Ministers, we have arrived at a working document that can serve as the basis for a preliminary agreement. Today, we met with the top diplomats of the co-chair countries whose concern is that we preserve what we have achieved and go further.

We understand and appreciate their special attention and their recognition of the progress made in this process.

That document addresses the core issue – the security of the people of Nagorno Karabakh, through self-determination – as well as the issues of refugees and territories that came about as a result of that self-determination struggle.

Unfortunately, outside of the negotiation process, there is another, contradictory and disheartening reality. First, there are militaristic calls ringing from the highest levels of Azerbaijan's leadership; second, Baku's systematic, organized hate propaganda has reached frightening levels within Azerbaijan. Third, Azerbaijan's willful obstruction of international envoys entrusted with monitoring the conflict and the region is threatening to upset the fine balance that we have sustained, and fourth, their active and aggressive search for alternative international forums in which to present their case, rebuffs their responsibility to compromise.

As hopeful as we are that a negotiated settlement is possible, this hostile atmosphere concerns us. Armenians believe there will be no new wars in our region. I know this because we won't start it, and they know they can't win it. There is no military solution for this conflict. The only solution is one based on

compromise, and in that sense, this document denies each side their maximalist desires and focuses instead on a sensible, respectable, acceptable solution that can be explained to ordinary people.

And will make it possible for ordinary people to reconnect over time and across political boundaries in a space split by war and hatred. For this to happen, the extraordinary people, those endowed with the power to lead must demonstrate vision and instill trust, re-create a Caucasus space and contribute to the region's stability and prosperity.

In this context and as members of this broad and inclusive European organization, we look enviously at the countries of Europe, all of whom, even those who were shaken to the core by the transformation of the world order, have found ways to place problems onto an agenda, without allowing those problems to abort the agenda. Perhaps we in the Caucasus will be next in adopting such European approaches to regional problems.

Mr. Chairman, as we prepare to welcome Finland, and hopefully soon after that Kazakhstan, perhaps I can even say the unmentionable: it's never been more true than today that this organization's annual meetings have never been just formal get-togethers. It is at times like this, when there are 6 or 7 daily headlines about the real tensions in the OSCE space, that we can be thankful that we do have this forum and we can commit to continuing to work to adapt it to our ever-increasing demands.

Thank you.