



United States Mission to the OSCE

U.S. National Statement on OSCE Minsk Group

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 17, 2020

The United States, in our national capacity, welcomes the December 14 statement by the *Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group* after their visit to the region for consultations with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan. We are pleased that the Russia-brokered ceasefire of November 9 is largely holding. We take note of the incidents in Hadrut region on December 12 and encourage all parties to lay down their arms. We echo the calls of the *Co-Chairs* for Armenia and Azerbaijan to take additional measures to stabilize the situation in accordance with their commitments and to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric.

We call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to work closely with the *Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group* to find a lasting and comprehensive political settlement, based on the principles of the *Helsinki Final Act* and other elements well known to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

We are encouraged by initial prisoner exchanges between the sides and encourage both countries to engage fully with the *International Committee of the Red Cross* and the *Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office* to complete this process for all prisoners, detainees, and remains, fully and expeditiously. Until all exchanges are completed, we urge both parties to ensure the humane treatment of all prisoners, detainees, and remains in their custody.

Mr. Chair, the humanitarian situation on the ground is dire and exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic; it will only get worse with the onset of winter. We urge the sides to ensure safe conditions for the efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance to all populations affected by the conflict without hindrance.

In conclusion, I wish to underline that the *Minsk Group Co-Chair* format offers the best means for Armenia and Azerbaijan to achieve a sustainable peace. I assure you that in our capacity as one of the *Minsk Group Co-Chairs*, the United States has the best interests of both parties at heart. At the end of the day, however, we can't want a peaceful and comprehensive resolution more than do Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The *Minsk Group* process offers a purpose-made, internationally recognized mechanism to bring the parties together for the necessary difficult conversations.

We urge the sides to reaffirm publicly and unequivocally their support for this mechanism and to work closely with the *Co-Chairs* to bring an end to this conflict that has cost too many lives.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.