

Remarks by the President of the Republic of Armenia H.E. Serzh Sargsyan at the OSCE Meeting of the Heads of State or Government

02.12.2010

President Nazarbayev,
Madam Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting of the Heads of States participating in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is, in a way, unique: This the first summit of the OSCE in the 21st century and the first to be held in the post-Soviet area. I would like to congratulate the Kazakhstani partners and personally President Nursultan Nazarbayev for the active chairmanship and excellent organization of the Summit.

Peoples living in the OSCE region have been following with hope and anticipation for holistic implementation of the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. The people of Nagorno Karabakh are one of them, entitled to expect the implementation of these principles and commitments, which are universal regardless of size of a country, its population, or natural resources.

Nagorno Karabakh proclaimed its independence in September 1991, followed by the Referendum on independence conducted in December in full compliance with the norms of international law, as well as the Soviet legislation which was in effect at the time. With the subsequent disintegration of the USSR, two legally equal state entities emerged: the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nagorno Karabagh Republic.

In response to the policy of ethnic cleansing and full-fledged military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan in 1992 against Karabagh, the unrecognized, yet legitimate state of Nagorno Karabagh, in the face of imminent extinction of its people, was forced to resort to its right to self-defense in full compliance with the norms of international law.

Failing to purge Nagorno Karabagh of its Armenian population by military action, in May of 1994 Azerbaijan was compelled to sign the tripartite ceasefire Agreement with Nagorno Karabagh and Armenia. That ceasefire could have become a basis for establishing durable peace in the interests of the people of the region.

The subsequent 16 years have been used by Azerbaijan, under the guise of negotiations and contrary to the efforts of the Minsk Group, to make preparations for a new military adventure. In Baku they believe that the cause-and-effect relationship behind the Karabagh conflict has been forgotten. By evoking today the need to reclaim territories currently under the control of the Nagorno Karabagh Self-Defense Army, Azerbaijan fails to acknowledge that it is impossible to eliminate the consequences of aggression without addressing the root cause of the conflict.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To my knowledge Azerbaijan is the only country on the European continent that boasts the manifold increase of its military spending. However, no necessary actions are taken with regard to Azerbaijan flagrantly exceeding the maximal levels on possession of treaty-limited materiel set by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces

in Europe; moreover, such offensive materiel is being sold to it, including by states participating in the OSCE. All this is accompanied by blatant Armenophobic statements by Azerbaijani leaders, by calls that incite animosity, aggression and violence. It has reached the point where Azerbaijani officials never miss a chance to claim that the capital of Armenia, Yerevan, is located (quote) “on historical Azeri lands” (end of quote). Recently at UNESCO they challenged the intellectual rights to the Khachkar, the stone-cross masterpiece of Armenian Christian art, insisting that the Khachkar is nothing else but an example of Azeri art. If that were to be the case, one may only wonder what was the rationale, just five years ago, behind the barbaric destruction of one of the greatest-ever monuments of that art, the medieval Armenian cemetery in Juga with thousands of Khachkars, and the construction in its place of a military firing-range. Incidentally, this became the present day epitome of a long-standing and persistent policy of total eradication of Armenian cultural heritage in Nakhijevan, a region that enjoys the highest degree of autonomy within Azerbaijan.

Distinguished colleagues,

The attempts of Azerbaijan to extort unilateral concessions through the threat of the use of force are doomed to fail upfront; they continue to remain the major impediment on the way to compromise and the settlement of this problem. And within the last week I was once again assured that Azerbaijan at this stage has no interest in the resolution of the Karabagh problem. Its sole objective is to inflict as much damage as possible on Armenia.

Armenia categorically refuses to accept the resumption of military hostilities in Nagorno Karabagh as an option. In case Azerbaijan resorts to military aggression, Armenia would not have any other choice but to recognize the Nagorno Karabagh Republic de jure and to invest all its capabilities into ensuring the security of the people of Artsakh.

Nagorno Karabagh has no future within Azerbaijan and, whatever the solution, it should emanate from the will of the people of Karabagh. This is the axis of the right of people to self-determination. Azerbaijan has neither legal, nor political, nor moral grounds for its claims over Nagorno Karabagh.

Distinguished Colleagues,

This OSCE Summit is of paramount importance for the future activities of the Organization. I would like to underline the great contribution of Kazakhstan, the country holding OSCE Chairmanship, to the Organization of this long-expected meeting, and thank the hosts for their warm hospitality.

Thank you.

(Astana)

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