



ARMENIA

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High-Level Segment of the Conference on Disarmament

Statement delivered by H.E. Andranik Hovhannisyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia

Mr. President,

Distinguished Colleagues,

It is a pleasure and honor to speak at the Conference on Disarmament.

Armenia reaffirms its strong commitment to the universal implementation of the international obligations in the areas of arms control and non-proliferation architecture and reiterates its steadfast support to the institutions that underpin it.

The unprecedented challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic once again vividly demonstrated that the international community must stand united in the face of the global crisis that can be overcome through joint and concerted actions. The same is true for the objectives of arms control and disarmament, which can be achieved through the universal efforts. We reiterate the principle of indivisibility of the international security, which implies that each and every country shares a responsibility to guarantee peace and security for all.

Armenia welcomes the extension of the New START Treaty and believes that it can boost the future dialogue on strengthening the global safety and security. The upcoming tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons gives another opportunity for our joint endeavors, which can lead to further progress in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy. We stress the importance of the universality of NPT and IAEA safeguard regime.

It is our conviction that our joint efforts should be directed not just for protecting and advancing what we have already achieved but at matching the rapid technological progress, especially in artificial intelligence, lethal autonomous weapons systems or drone technologies. The new international instruments for addressing 21st-century threats are crucial for regulating their uncontrolled hostile use, for saving lives and preventing conflicts.

Mr. President,

The erosion of the arms control regimes does not happen in a vacuum. It is usually a consequence of the years-long noncompliance to the main treaties and documents, as well as the negligence of such crucial principles of the UN Charter as the non-use of force and the maintenance of international peace and security. The international failures of identifying early warning signals of such violations usually lead to hostilities.

Azerbaijan is an exact point of reference. Its noncompliance to the core arms control regimes such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe started years ago and unapologetically continued in the atmosphere of global indifference and appeasement. It is in this environment of negligence that Azerbaijan dared to attack Nagorno-Karabakh last September, despite the call of the UN Secretary General for the global ceasefire in times of pandemic. It claimed the lives of 72 civilians, including children, women and elderly people.

From the day one of the aggression and almost constantly on the duration of all 44 days of the war Azerbaijan used cluster munitions against the residential areas of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is strictly prohibited under the laws of war and relevant conventions.

The Amnesty International was the first to confirm the use of cluster munition in the residential areas of Nagorno-Karabakh. Later the British-American non-profit organization HALO Trust, which for years has been working on demining in Nagorno-Karabakh reported that “rockets and cluster munitions have been found in civilian areas and the usually clean and peaceful streets are pitted with bomb craters, burnt out cars and shelled buildings.” The Human Rights Watch conducted an on-site investigation and documented the use of cluster munition by Azerbaijan in residential areas. It was not able to identify any military equipment or bases in the neighborhoods where the attacks took place.

The Azerbaijani Armed Forces also used incendiary weapons containing, what is most likely, white phosphorus or thermite substances against the peaceful population sheltered in forests. It also caused an irreplaceable environmental damage.

These indiscriminate targeting of civilians, accompanied by instances of immense cruelty, decapitation and mutilation once again demonstrated that Azerbaijan adheres to the policy of ethnic cleansing of Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. And Indeed, the areas of Nagorno-Karabakh currently occupied by Azerbaijan are settled now by foreign terrorist fighters recruited among the jihadist forces of Syria, which reinforced the army of Azerbaijan during the war against Nagorno-Karabakh. This fact was confirmed by the UN Working Group on Mercenaries.

Three months passed after the ceasefire was established Azerbaijan refuses to release Armenian Prisoners of War and civilian detainees, which is a gross violation of the International Humanitarian Law.

Mr. President,

The arms control and non-proliferation architecture were established with the objective of ensuring safer and more secure life for all. It could not be accomplished without concerted efforts and political will. A similar joint effort and resolve is necessary for its preservation, and no negligence can be tolerated.

I thank you.