

United Nations

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# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

*Provisional*

## 9132<sup>nd</sup> meeting

Thursday, 15 September 2022, 10.05 a.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière . . . . .	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
	Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
	India . . . . .	Mrs. Kamboj
	Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Moran
	Kenya . . . . .	Mrs. Toroitich
	Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Eckersley
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Mills

## Agenda

Letter dated 13 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/688)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Letter dated 13 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/688)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and Americas, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

**Mr. Jenča:** I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for providing me this opportunity to brief the Security Council on recent developments in the South Caucasus.

On the evening of 12 September, the authorities in Armenia and Azerbaijan reported heavy fighting on their international border. According to reports, heavy artillery, drones and large-calibre weapons were used. The exchange of fire reportedly continued through 13 and 14 September. Yesterday evening, it was announced that a cease-fire had been agreed starting at 8 p.m. local time. We welcome that agreement and hope the ceasefire will hold.

Earlier this week, the Armenian Ministry of Defence stated that the Azerbaijani side was targeting Armenian military positions, as well as civilian infrastructure, in the Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor and Syunik regions of the country. Armenia reported 105 of its servicemen killed and six civilians wounded as of last night. While Armenia called the events a deliberate attack, Azerbaijan countered that they were retaliatory measures made in response to provocations from Armenia. Azerbaijan, for its part, reported 71 servicemen killed and two civilians wounded. Both countries have written to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council alleging

violations of the ceasefire brokered by Russia in 2020 and of their territorial integrity.

The United Nations is not in a position to verify or confirm the specifics of those reports. We remain deeply concerned, however, about this dangerous escalation, including its possible impact on civilians, and have urged the sides to take immediate and concrete steps to de-escalate the tensions. The United Nations country teams in both Armenia and Azerbaijan maintain open channels with the authorities and stand prepared to respond to emerging humanitarian needs, if requested and as conditions allow.

The fighting this week was the latest and most extensive in a series of incidents since 2020. It highlights the fact that the process of normalizing the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan continues to encounter serious obstacles. The escalation also underscores the urgent need for the parties to advance the ongoing process of delimitation and demarcation within the framework of their mutual recognition of their respective territorial integrity and sovereignty. We urge the parties to take advantage of that important mechanism as an essential step towards alleviating tensions at the border. This week's events are also a stark reminder that the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan also have the potential to destabilize the region. They highlight the need for all actors, in the region and beyond, to act constructively and press the sides to work for a peaceful settlement.

In that regard, a number of international mediation efforts, which we fully support, have been ongoing in the region, including those of the Russian Federation and the European Union. They can lay the groundwork for enabling the parties to resume a dialogue aimed at a long-term peace. At Armenia's request, the Collective Security Treaty Organization will send a mission to Armenia to assess the situation on the border and report back to its member States. The United Nations remains in close contact with the parties and organizations concerned, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. During my recent visit to the region, I was able to assess first-hand the challenges that the parties are facing in resolving this long-lasting conflict. I returned with the belief that while differences and mistrust persist between the sides, they are surmountable.

The international community must remain fully committed to a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and spare no effort to de-escalate the

current tensions, bring the parties back to the negotiating table and help them achieve peace and stability in the region. In the immediate term, the parties must abide by their obligations to fully implement the trilateral statement on the ceasefire of 9 November 2020. We urge them to return to the negotiating table and take steps towards the signing of a lasting peace treaty. It is also important that the Security Council send a similar united message in order to enable the parties to focus on a diplomatic solution.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Miloslav Jenča for his statement on the military clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the situation on the ground.

The resurgence of clashes between the armed forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan brings back sad memories of the 2020 conflict, in which thousands of people died. My country deplores the loss of life on both sides and condemns the use of armed force to settle disputes between States. We reiterate that there can be no viable military solution to the conflict. Any escalation of violence will only deepen the resentment and tensions. This is a complicated situation that calls for the engagement of all partners in the region and beyond, including all those with influence over the belligerents. We welcome the ceasefire reached yesterday and call on the parties comply with the agreement on the ground.

The international community must work collectively to ease the tensions and prevent escalation in order to ensure that the conflict does not flare up again. The numerous calls in recent days for an easing of tensions between the parties is a sign of a shared desire to see the fighting end. We need to ensure support for the subregional, regional and international initiatives aimed at bringing the parties back to the negotiating table. In addition, the parties involved must refrain from any action that could fuel tensions and undermine a political settlement. It will be vital to maintain the ceasefire in Nagorno Karabakh and along the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia and to re-establish diplomatic channels at all levels. My country supports the Secretary-General's call to the parties to de-escalate and return to the negotiating table. We must focus all of our efforts on achieving that essential objective.

In conclusion, we urge the parties to show restraint and encourage the Security Council to speak with one voice in support of re-establishing the diplomatic channels so as to ensure a restoration of peace between the two countries.

**Mrs. Kamboj** (India): Let me join others in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for updating us on the latest developments in the situation at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

I thank the presidency for scheduling an open meeting today. The informal deliberations held by the Security Council yesterday were a timely beginning for us to seriously consider why the situation in the Caucasus, and specifically the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, continues to be tense. The violent hostilities in Nagorno Karabakh in September 2020 are still fresh in our minds. The recent reports of attacks along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, including the targeting of civilian settlements and infrastructure, are a matter of deep concern. We call on the aggressor side to immediately cease hostilities and exercise restraint. These actions are a serious threat to peace and stability in the region. The Council therefore simply cannot afford to stand by silently and let the situation deteriorate any further.

The 9 November 2020 ceasefire brokered by Russia, as well as the peace processes being mediated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the OSCE Minsk Group and the European Union, provide useful mechanisms for resolving all the outstanding issues. It has been our consistent view that such disputes should be settled through diplomacy and dialogue. There can be no military or violent solution to any conflict. We encourage both sides to pursue diplomatic pathways to arrive at a lasting and peaceful solution.

In conclusion, we continue to reiterate that the global order must be anchored in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I too thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing. I also welcome the presence here today of the representatives for Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Tensions have been on the rise again in recent weeks and we are deeply concerned about the ongoing military hostilities along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, including the reported artillery strikes that have

hit civilians and civilian infrastructure inside Armenia. Reports indicate that it is the worst fighting seen since the 2020 war over the disputed Nagorno Karabakh region. The accounts of civilian deaths and injuries on both sides of the conflict are most disturbing. The use of military force to settle disputes is unacceptable.

Humanitarian actors are worried about the upsurge in military activity and its potential humanitarian consequences. That activity affects the lives and safety of people residing in border areas and blocks their access to essential infrastructure.

We are, however, encouraged by the news about an agreement on a cessation of hostilities. We welcome that initiative and call on both sides to take immediate steps to de-escalate tensions and to exercise maximum restraint.

Norway recognizes the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Armenia and Azerbaijan within their internationally recognized borders. And we continue to support the dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan to implement the ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020. We also welcome the efforts of the European Union and the United States to help advance negotiations.

We urge Azerbaijan and Armenia to fully implement previously reached agreements and to return to the negotiating table in good faith and without preconditions. Any outstanding issues must be resolved peacefully through dialogue and within existing formats.

**Ms. Moran** (Ireland): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing and welcome the Permanent Representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Ireland is deeply concerned by the serious fighting that has broken out along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in recent days, including reports of attacks directed at critical civilian infrastructure inside Armenian territory, which are prohibited under international humanitarian law. We regret the reported loss of life.

Ireland welcomes the update by Assistant Secretary-General Jenča on a cessation of hostilities. It is vital that the sides exercise maximum restraint and refrain from a further escalation of violence. We urge them to commit to the ceasefire and to respect prior international agreements.

We emphasize the absolute need to adhere to the Charter of the United Nations. Violations of the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of States are never acceptable.

All forces must urgently return to the positions they held before this regrettable escalation in hostilities. No forces should remain on the territory of another sovereign State.

In Armenia and Azerbaijan, as elsewhere, violence can never be the answer. A sustainable resolution to the conflict is possible only through dialogue and diplomacy. We know that inclusive dialogue and diplomacy, with women at the table and with their meaningful participation ensured, delivers stronger and lasting peace. There can be no alternative path to lasting peace and security in the region.

We welcome the United Nations readiness, as indicated by Assistant Secretary-General Jenča, to step up its mediation efforts upon request.

The European Union (EU) is undertaking immediate efforts to support the necessary de-escalation in hostilities. The European Union remains committed to acting as an honest broker between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including through the Brussels dialogue process. Ireland, together with our EU partners, continues to support renewed efforts towards a negotiated, comprehensive and sustained settlement of the broader conflict, particularly on the longer-term status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

We support the common goal of a South Caucasus that enjoys peace, security and prosperity. That is what its people deserve.

**Mrs. Toroitich** (Kenya): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing on the most recent developments. I also welcome the participation of Armenia and Azerbaijan in this meeting.

Kenya is gravely concerned by the recent reports of renewed fighting along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, with both sides trading accusations of shelling and the amassing of heavy weaponry, as well as strikes against settlements and civilian infrastructure, leading to civilian casualties.

We recall that this conflict has previously led to multiple deaths and many injured and displaced persons. It has also led to the destruction of critical civilian infrastructure, including schools and markets, as well as water supplies. Clearly, every effort must be expended to avoid another cycle of violence.

In that regard, Kenya urges the parties to refrain from further escalation of the situation. They should exercise maximum restraint and strictly observe the ceasefire agreement made in their statements of November 2021.

Kenya supports any efforts to mediate a resolution of the conflict, especially the important role of the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In that regard, we urge all relevant regional and international actors to actively work with the sides to achieve an urgent end to the fighting and return to negotiations towards a comprehensive and sustainable settlement—a settlement that would lead to the normalization of relations between the two neighbouring countries based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In conclusion, I reiterate that dialogue should be pursued as the primary option in resolving conflicts. The two countries should engage in good faith for their mutual benefit, as well as regional peace and stability.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

China is concerned about the recent armed conflicts and casualties in the border areas of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Maintaining regional peace and stability is in the common interests of the two countries. We call on the two countries to exercise restraint, persist in resolving problems and differences through political dialogue and take measures to avoid further escalation of the situation.

As confirmed by the briefing we just heard, both sides recently reached a ceasefire agreement. We hope that both parties will abide by that agreement in a common effort to ease the situation.

Armenia and Azerbaijan set up a border demarcation commission last May, which recently held a joint meeting. We hope the two sides will continue to interact positively on the border issue.

The normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan is inseparable from the proper settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. China acknowledges the historical development of the issue, and its position has been consistent. We support the resolution of problems and differences through political dialogue and hope that all parties will find a proper solution

as soon as possible in accordance with universally recognized the international law and norms governing international relations.

China welcomes and supports the tripartite joint statement reached by Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in November 2020 and will continue to support the pursuit of positive progress on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue under the framework of the Minsk Group and with the good offices of Russia.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are inseparable neighbours. Maintaining stable bilateral relations and developing forward-looking friendly cooperation is not only in the fundamental interests of the two countries and the two peoples, but also conducive to the peace and stability of the whole region. We hope and believe that both countries possess full political wisdom and are able to resolve problems and differences through dialogue and consultation, restore peace and stability and achieve common security.

China is willing to work with the international community on constructive efforts aimed at easing the situation.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for the valuable information he shared with us, and we welcome the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan to this meeting.

Mexico expresses its deep concern about the clashes that took place on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which left dozens of people dead on both sides and — regrettably, as we heard today — have impacted the civilian population. We call on both sides to respect the ceasefire.

The conflict between the two countries in 2020 took a heavy toll on the civilian population and basic infrastructure. The international community must seek to avoid a repetition of such an episode. The parties must respect and fully implement the agreements signed, including the provisions of the 9 November 2020 agreement, and resolve their differences through dialogue.

We urge the international actors with the greatest leverage over both parties to urge them to return to the negotiating table and maintain an ongoing dialogue. We echo the Secretary-General's message of support for the mediation efforts currently under way in the

region, particularly the ongoing efforts of the Russian Federation and the European Union.

Mexico calls on Armenia and Azerbaijan to show their political will to put an end to hostilities and to return to the path of diplomacy in order to settle their unresolved differences.

**Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana): I wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing on the renewed clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan and express our support for the engagement of the United Nations with the parties in order to help find a lasting solution to the long-standing conflict that has engulfed the region. I also welcome the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan to this meeting.

Like other members of the Security Council, Ghana regrets the hostilities that erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan early this week, which each side has blamed on the other. The fighting, which is the most intense since November 2020, has resulted in military and civilian casualties on both sides, as we heard today. We are concerned that further escalation of hostilities would have adverse consequences for the region and beyond.

We therefore welcome today's meeting as an opportunity for the Council to focus its attention on how this centuries-old conflict, which was again triggered in 1988, can be peacefully resolved on the basis of established international principles that are mutually acceptable to the parties.

We strongly believe that the use of violence cannot be the final arbiter for the settlement of this dispute, and we welcome reports of the agreement reached by the parties on the evening of 14 September for a cessation of hostilities.

We urge them to sustain the truce and renew our call for the complete cessation of hostilities and the de-escalation of tensions. We urge the parties to remain committed to existing ceasefire arrangements, including the trilateral statement of November 2020, made by the leaders of the two countries and the Russian Federation. As we know, the recent clashes did not happen in a vacuum, but have come on the back of the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In our view, that speaks to the need for the intensification of negotiations on all unresolved issues in order to move the parties closer to a conclusive resolution that must be based on the principles of international law, with due regard to the Charter of the United Nations

and its provisions relating to the mutual recognition of territorial integrity, the non-use or threat of use of force in the acquisition of territory and the pacific settlement of disputes.

We believe that international mediation efforts are critical at this juncture in order to help remove the mutual distrust and discontent between the parties and facilitate an effective political process for peace. In that regard, we encourage the Secretary-General's good-offices role, urge the reactivated engagement of the Minsk Group co-Chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and note the invitation by Armenia to the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

We also encourage the resumption of talks between the parties following the discussions held under the auspices of the Council of the European Union. We believe that the outcomes of the discussions relating to the demarcation and delimitation of borders will help to reduce tensions, facilitate the normalization of relations and set the stage for negotiating a future Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty.

In conclusion, we wish to emphasize that at the heart of finding a solution to the dispute should be the willingness of both parties to make the hard sacrifices necessary for the cause of peace. We urge them to work courageously to guarantee the security, rights and freedoms of all ethnic populations and the right of return for all who have been displaced.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing, and I welcome the delegations of Armenia and Azerbaijan to this meeting.

The border clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in the past few days are contrary to the spirit and letter of the trilateral statements of 9 November 2020, 11 January 2021 and 26 November 2021. There is a risk that these incidents could undermine the needed trust between Armenia and Azerbaijan and thereby jeopardize the progress made in the peace process over the past two years.

Brazil calls on the parties to respect international law and the Charter of the United Nations and to resolve their disputes through dialogue and diplomacy. We urge both sides to avoid actions that could escalate tensions and threaten the security of the civilian population, particularly in the districts affected by this week's clashes. We add our voice to that of other

members of the Security Council in favour of a lasting diplomatic solution to the territorial issues between the two countries within the framework of the commission established to demarcate the bilateral border.

Brazil will continue to support further political and diplomatic efforts for a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. We greatly value the moderating influence that the regional actors can exert in preventing violence, and we encourage initiatives to that end. I also deeply regret the loss of life and express my sympathies to those who lost family and friends.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Miroslav Jenča for his thorough briefing on recent developments between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and I welcome the participation of the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan in today's meeting.

We welcome the ceasefire agreement reached between the two parties yesterday evening, and we appreciate the negotiation efforts that led to that agreement.

The United Arab Emirates has expressed its deep concern about the recent military confrontations, including fighting in border areas, and about reports of casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. As we are keen to avoid further escalation, there is a need to make concerted efforts for a lasting ceasefire. We urge both parties to demonstrate restraint, echoing the Secretary-General's call on 13 September concerning that issue. My country looks forward to building on this positive development so that both parties are able to reach more comprehensive agreements for achieving lasting peace and avoid endangering civilian lives because of war.

We note that any new escalation under the current circumstances, whereby recurrent crises and humanitarian suffering are becoming increasingly difficult to curb, would pose a threat to the current fragile world situation. Therefore, we must shoulder our responsibilities in the Security Council to prevent any exacerbation of the ongoing crisis. We also must encourage both parties to return to the negotiating table and to settle their differences through peaceful and diplomatic means.

The tripartite agreement of 2020 constitutes a basis for ensuring stability in the region. We witnessed positive and promising developments at the beginning of the year towards continued negotiations between

the two parties. We have also seen the emergence of encouraging prospects for the settlement of the outstanding issues between them. It is essential to take advantage of that momentum to make tangible progress in the peace process. In that connection, we hope that the two parties will continue with mediation efforts constructively and in good faith in order to achieve a lasting peaceful solution and to spare the region repercussions of any further escalation that threatens regional peace and stability.

The United Arab Emirates stresses once again the importance of preserving the ceasefire and the parties continuing their efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his update.

Like others here, we are deeply concerned by the reports of heavy fighting that has taken place along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border during the past few days. Exchanges of fire with many casualties, including civilians, have been reported by both sides. We express regret for the loss of life.

It was the worst escalation of hostilities between the two countries since 2020. We welcomed with optimism the positive developments during the past few weeks between Armenia and Azerbaijan, especially the fourth high-level meeting organized on 31 August in Brussels under the auspices of the President of the European Council. The recent armed clashes run counter to and undermine such efforts. We hope that those incidents will not undo the progress achieved.

As we know, dealing with difficult and complex issues in post-conflict situations requires trust, resolve and continued efforts. We carefully read the communications from both countries and listened to Assistant Secretary-General Jenča's briefing here today.

In such a volatile situation and with the information we have, it is not easy to have full clarity based on independently verified facts. While the parties blame each other, we highlight the importance of avoiding any actions that feed into mistrust, including military build-up or other provocations along the border. A blame game and retaliatory measures will only bring about more clashes and could lead to renewed fighting and an open conflict with serious consequences. Those serious and worrisome developments are a stark reminder of

the volatility and fragility of the situation on the ground in the absence of a peace treaty.

The latest acts of violence erupted beyond the Nagorno-Karabakh region. It is important and urgent to do the utmost so that the conflict lines do not spread further. As everybody knows, European security is already under serious threat from the ongoing war in Ukraine. A further escalation of the situation in the region leading to the outbreak of a conflict would have far-reaching consequences that would transcend the region's borders.

As in every conflict, civilians are the first to suffer, but let us not forget also that the wider South Caucasus is a crucial artery for energy commodities to Europe and the world markets. At a time when the world markets have been deeply affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine, with severe impacts on energy markets, any further disruption elsewhere would only increase volatility and make the global situation worse. Needless to say, the humanitarian situation would also worsen even further, which we certainly do not need.

We support international efforts within existing formats, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the active role played by the European Union, to stop the hostilities. We welcome the ceasefire that entered into force yesterday evening and which, according to reports, is being respected so far. We call on all sides to continue its implementation. We welcome the strong involvement of the European Union in the normalization process between Armenian and Azerbaijan, including at the highest levels through the President of the European Council, Mr. Charles Michel.

We reiterate that there is no alternative to reaching a peacefully negotiated solution to the conflict via the path of diplomacy.

**Mr. Eckersley** (United Kingdom): We thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his very helpful update. We welcome the Ambassadors of Azerbaijan and Armenia to the Chamber.

The United Kingdom welcomes the news of a ceasefire brokered on the evening of 14 September, but remains deeply concerned over numerous reports of civilian casualties caused by the military action that was launched earlier this week. The long-standing position of the United Kingdom is that there is no military solution to the conflict. We have been urging an immediate and sustained cessation of all military

activity and for armed forces to withdraw to their original positions before the escalation.

It is only through diplomacy, in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, that lasting peace can be achieved. That was demonstrated by encouraging developments in recent weeks, including the return of prisoners of war by Azerbaijan and the trilateral meetings held in Brussels. We urge the leaders of both Armenia and Azerbaijan to re-engage in good faith in that dialogue, with the support of the international community, and to return to substantive negotiations to settle all outstanding matters between them.

The United Kingdom will continue to support the diplomatic efforts of international partners in Vienna and Brussels as they seek to secure much-needed stability and security for the people of the region.

**Mr. Mills** (United States of America): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his useful briefing this morning.

Let me begin by noting that we are deeply troubled by the outbreak of violence along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, including reports of the shelling of civilian infrastructure in Armenia. We offer our condolences to the families of those killed and injured in the renewed violence.

The United States has engaged with Armenian and Azerbaijani officials and conveyed our deep concern over military actions along the border. We are particularly disturbed by reports of civilians being harmed inside Armenia. All sides must fully observe their obligations under international humanitarian law, including those related to the protection of civilians.

Like others, the United States welcomes the cessation of all hostilities and encourages both parties to continue to exercise restraint. Military forces should now disengage to allow both parties to resolve all outstanding issues through peaceful negotiations. There is an urgent need to return to talks aimed at a lasting peaceful resolution to the conflict and the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

I want to be clear today: the United States is firm in that there can be no military solution to the conflict. We encourage both Governments to re-establish direct lines of communication across diplomatic and military channels and to recommit to the diplomatic process. A negotiated comprehensive settlement of all remaining

issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan is needed. The international community must continue to engage diplomatically to help broker a lasting peace.

The United States is dedicated to a sustainable ceasefire and peaceful resolution. Secretary Blinken spoke with Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Aliyev to convey our deep concern over military actions along the border. Ambassador Philip Reeker, Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations, is also in the region meeting with senior Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders.

The United States is committed to promoting a peaceful, democratic and prosperous future for the South Caucasus region. We urge the parties to intensify their diplomatic engagement and to make use of existing mechanisms for direct communication to find comprehensive solutions to all outstanding issues related to, and resulting from, the conflict. We stand ready to facilitate dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan bilaterally, through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and in coordination with partners in order to achieve a long-term political settlement to the conflict in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations as well as the Helsinki Final Act.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing.

The Russian Federation is extremely concerned about the sharp escalation of the situation in certain areas on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border that took place on the night of 12 and 13 September and the subsequent exchanges of fire. As a result, a large number of servicemen were killed and there were civilian casualties. We express our deepest condolences to their families and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

We consider the use of force as unacceptable. We hope to see the implementation of all the ceasefire agreements brokered by Russia. We call on Azerbaijan and Armenia to show restraint and refrain from steps that could increase the tensions, as well as to strictly comply with the agreements within the framework of the trilateral statements of the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia made on 9 November 2020 and 11 January and 26 November 2021.

In order to stabilize the situation, the leadership of the Russian Federation is in close contact with Baku and Yerevan. The reduction of tensions was discussed

during telephone conversations between President Putin of Russia and Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia, the Foreign Ministers of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Defence Ministers of Russia and Armenia. We expect the topic to be the main focus of attention at the meeting between Mr. Putin and President Aliyev of Azerbaijan on the margins of the Summit of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to be held in Samarkand on 15 and 16 September. Significant efforts in that regard are being made through Russia's Ministry of Defence and Federal Security Service Border Service. Our military is in close contact with both countries in order to achieve a sustainable ceasefire and the return of Azerbaijani and Armenian soldiers to their previous positions.

The situation was discussed at the extraordinary session of the Collective Security Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on 13 September. It resulted in an agreement by the CSTO secretariat and joint staff to send a mission to the Republic of Armenia in order to study the situation in various areas on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and make appropriate recommendations and proposals to be reviewed by the CSTO Heads of State. It was decided that the mission should be led by the CSTO's Secretary-General Stanislav Zas and Chief of Joint Staff General Anatoliy Sidorov. Today the mission is beginning carry out its tasks. We hope that its impartial work on the ground will be a factor in helping to de-escalate the situation.

We continue to believe that all contentious issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan should be resolved exclusively through political and diplomatic means, and, with regard to the border issues, through the work of the bilateral Armenian-Azerbaijani Border Delimitation Commission, with the advisory assistance of Russia. Incidentally, the first meeting of the national delegations was held on 24 May at the border itself. The second took place in Moscow on 30 August. The main work will be done by Baku and Yerevan, but we stand ready to share our experience on border delimitation and demarcation in the post-Soviet era, provide cartographic and other materials and other necessary advisory and technical assistance. In order to ensure the effectiveness of such efforts, it is important to promote stability and security in the border area without outside interference and to avoid politicization. Unfortunately, as the events of 12 and 13 September have shown, delimitation and demarcation issues are very sensitive and do not come without disruptions and

escalation. What is needed is swift stabilization and a return to dialogue.

The Russian side is making every effort to normalize relations between the countries based on the three trilateral statements made by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The first of them, most importantly, ended the hostilities and defined the parameters for the deployment of a Russian peacekeeping contingent along the Lachin corridor and the line of contact in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict area. Our peacekeepers are continuing to ensure the ceasefire in their area of responsibility and assist in resolving acute humanitarian issues. Building on the provisions of the first statement, a second, dedicated to unblocking all economic and transportation links in the region, was adopted in January 2021. A trilateral working group, co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, has been established and activated. Substantial work has been done, and a package of major projects is being coordinated with an emphasis on launching rail and road communication between Azerbaijan and Armenia, with possible access to neighbouring countries. The projects include the construction of a railroad and a highway between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through Armenia's Syunik oblast.

One of the key points of the third statement made on 26 November 2021 was precisely that of establishing mechanisms for border demarcation and delimitation. Besides that, one of the central points in our efforts to normalize Armenian-Azerbaijani relations is the preparation of a peace treaty. Both sides have confirmed to us their desire for the relevant Russian assistance, and we treat that issue with the greatest possible responsibility. Despite the current escalation in tensions, the work has continued. Igor Khovaev, the special representative of Russia's Foreign Ministry for issues relating to the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, visited Baku on 8 and 9 September and Yerevan on 13 and 14 September. Relevant consultations and the search for points of convergence will continue.

Obviously, we are only at the beginning of the difficult path to reconciliation between the two countries. We believe that the basis for the normalization of relations between Baku and Yerevan continues to be the full implementation of the provisions of the trilateral statements by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and

Armenia. All three documents are comprehensive and inextricably linked, as their provisions are interdependent. Their implementation will ensure the conditions for achieving sustainable peace in the Southern Caucasus, which is in the interests not only of the States of the region but of all their neighbours. Russia is determined to continue to provide Baku and Yerevan with all necessary assistance for the implementation of the agreements in formats and a scope acceptable to both sides. Achieving sustainable results will require time and considerable efforts from both Baku and Yerevan, as well as the unity of the international community. Geopolitical competition and zero-sum games can only damage the process. But the most important thing for us today is to stop the fighting and implement the ceasefire agreements.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing. France is very concerned about the military actions on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which have led to dozens of casualties. Several areas on Armenian territory have been fired on and there are reports of strikes on civilian infrastructure. We are dealing with the most serious fighting since the 2020 war. In the face of the escalation, France, together with its partners, is working to restore respect for the ceasefire. President Macron has met with the Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of Azerbaijan. The Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs also met successively with her Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts. Three main messages were conveyed to the parties.

First, priority must be given to strict compliance with the 8 November 2020 ceasefire. We are all, without exception, bound by the Charter of the United Nations to settle our disputes peacefully. We also call on Azerbaijan to maintain its forces in their original positions. The delimitation of the border must be decided exclusively through negotiations. In the present case and in view of the advance of Azerbaijani forces beyond certain segments of the border, the territorial integrity of Armenia must be respected. Finally, the parties must resume a dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues through negotiations. We call on the parties to make progress on the delimitation and demarcation of the border and on ways to prevent further incidents through measures to distance forces.

France recalls that the parties are bound to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and urges them to facilitate the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid. We welcome the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

We call for the release of prisoners. France welcomes the release by Azerbaijan of five Armenian prisoners on 8 September. France stands ready to continue its efforts, alongside all partners and the Secretary-General. In its capacity as co-Chair of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and as a member State of the European Union, France will continue supporting all efforts to achieve lasting peace in the region.

France welcomes the efforts of the President of the European Council, who has met with President Aliyev and Prime Minister Pashinyan four times since November 2021 with a view to normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The European Union is also working to ensure respect for the ceasefire.

It is important that the Security Council remain seized of the matter and that the efforts of its members be focused on ending the hostilities, ensuring lasting respect for the ceasefire and contributing to the implementation of the commitments made by the parties under the trilateral statement and during the mediation by the President of the European Council.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

**Mr. Margaryan (Armenia):** I would like to express appreciation to the French presidency for convening today's emergency meeting upon the request contained in the letter from the Foreign Minister of Armenia (see S/2022/688, annex).

This meeting takes place at a grave time for my country, as acts of criminal aggression have been perpetrated against the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia, in flagrant violation of the international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The perpetrator, indeed, has a name — Azerbaijan, Armenia's neighbour to the east, which is several times larger in territory, population and resources, and whose pervasive record of hostile conduct, rhetoric and unchecked, disproportionate violence demonstrates a most dangerous pattern of utter disregard for every tenet and norm of international law and reveals a clear

intention to instigate wars, destruction and instability in the region.

In the early hours of 13 September, Azerbaijan initiated a major military offensive, targeting the eastern and south-eastern regions of Armenia with the use of a wide range of weaponry, including artillery and combat unmanned aerial vehicles. The offensive took the lives of 105 people, left dozens wounded and dozens missing and inflicted various forms of material damage, including upon civilian settlements and infrastructure. The scale of destruction and the intensity of shelling is so high that, at the moment, we have only initial statistics.

Approximately 200 civilian homes suffered serious damage, with more than 60 of them completely destroyed. For a few consecutive days, several densely populated towns in Armenia, including Goris, Jermuk, Vardenis, Kapan and Sotk, came under heavy fire. The most recent reports indicate that the offensive has displaced at least 2,750 people in the Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor and Syunik provinces, which include 370 children and 55 persons with disabilities among those displaced. The shelling of the resort town of Jermuk, which has absolutely no military targets, is nothing short of a war crime, as are the strikes against the Kechut reservoir, with a potentially catastrophic human toll and environmental impact.

In flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law, at least seven identified prisoners of war have been captured, with video evidence suggesting that there could be more captives held by Azerbaijan. The offensive targeted journalists, both local and foreign, who were carrying out their work covering the events.

We have often reflected at the United Nations and here in the Chamber on the challenges for justice and accountability. In doing so, we are constantly reminded that impunity for past crimes can lead to the most serious violations in the future — the ultimate manifestations of which are genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Advancing the early-warning and accurate reporting capacities of the United Nations to monitor and respond includes identifying the systematic policies of promulgating hate speech, incitement and the glorification of violence on the basis of ethnicity or religion, in particular when such policies are State-led.

Over the past year, we have repeatedly brought to the attention of the Council the fact that Azerbaijan has

been engaging in the illegal practice of acquisition of territories by force and have duly reported such acts of aggression under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Through the letters dated 14 May 2021 (S/2021/467), 29 July 2021 (S/2021/693) and 16 November 2021 (see S/2021/956, annex), Armenia alerted the members of the Council about Azerbaijan's persistent violations of the norms and principles of international law, as well as the provisions of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 on the establishment of ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, following the 44-day war in 2020.

The most recent attacks demonstrate that, in the absence of proper accountability measures, policies of aggression are likely to continue, and even increase in scope and scale. It also follows that, emboldened by the results of the use of force in the past, Azerbaijan now seeks to normalize violence and aggression to capture territories by force. Over the past two days, Azerbaijan has intruded and occupied more than 10 square kilometres of the sovereign territory of Armenia. That attack follows the offensives in May and November 2021, when Azerbaijan occupied approximately 45 square kilometres of Armenian land.

The actions of Azerbaijan are in blatant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter, the Helsinki Final Act of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and international humanitarian law. Moreover, the military aggression of Azerbaijan goes against the letter and spirit of the trilateral statements of 9 November 2020 and 26 November 2021. The latter in particular stipulates that the sides agreed to "take steps to increase the level of stability and security on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border".

I should underline in particular that that act of aggression occurred in the context of peace negotiations conducted in different forums and facilitated by various actors. Armenia has engaged in all those processes in good faith, with the aim of stabilizing the situation in the South Caucasus. Armenia has publicly undertaken to work to bring about peace in the region and has declared its readiness to launch negotiations for a peace agreement. This aggression is Azerbaijan's answer to the mediation efforts of the international community.

As we speak, we are receiving reports that the fragile ceasefire is under threat. There are credible reports that Azerbaijan is planning yet another military offensive by widening the geography of the aggression,

including from the direction of Nakhijevan, to realize the unlawful ambitions to establish an extraterritorial corridor through the sovereign territory of Armenia.

The representative of Azerbaijan is here to offer justifications for his country's predatory conduct. Make no mistake — there is none, at least not under international law. For all the talk about manufactured pretexts such as "Armenia's provocations", "occupation" or "Azerbaijan's right to self-defence" and "counter-attacks", the truth is that no such actual armed attack has been initiated by Armenia.

We understand that, for many years, the blame game and speculation have been Azerbaijan's best friends and that it is precisely for that reason that Azerbaijan has been so vehemently opposed to any idea leading to the creation of internationally monitored verification mechanisms to identify ceasefire violations. If established, such measures would be instrumental to ending the blame game. They would be critical to helping to sustain the ceasefire so that peace and diplomacy have a chance.

In reality, today's acts of aggression are nothing short of the product of an intentional decision to walk away from the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations and opt for a military solution to the conflict. The very fact that a large-scale military aggression was unleashed amid an unprecedented pandemic in 2020 is a crime of global proportions in itself and should be evaluated and addressed on its own merit, or rather the lack thereof.

It follows that the use of force and threats have become Azerbaijan's distinct pattern of behaviour in all conflict situations. The claims that Azerbaijan resolved the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by force, abolished all collective rights of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and even eliminated the very name of that Armenian populated land are illustrative in that regard.

Armenia is well aware of the challenges and complexities in international politics today. We are equally cognizant of the growing energy demand in the world. Having said that, we appeal to the Council to live up to its responsibility under the United Nations Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. Azerbaijan is yet to abide by its humanitarian obligations vis-à-vis Armenian prisoners of war, to commit in good faith to the preservation of Armenia's cultural and religious heritage and to address the anti-Armenian rhetoric, including at the level of public officials and institutions, as indicated in the

provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice against Azerbaijan in December 2021 under the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We strongly urge the members of the Security Council to come up with tangible outcomes following the discussions in today's emergency meeting. Those should include a strong condemnation of Azerbaijan's unprovoked aggression against the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia; a demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Azerbaijan's forces from the sovereign territory of Armenia; and a demand for Azerbaijan to refrain from any future acts of aggression against the territorial integrity of Armenia and fully comply with its international obligations and commitments at the highest level, including the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and trilateral statements. We call on the Council to urge Azerbaijan to engage peacefully in the negotiation process, including on issues resulting from and related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including that of its status, and to release and repatriate all Armenian prisoners of war — we stress that acting contrary to that constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

**Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan): This meeting of the Security Council takes place in the aftermath of a serious military escalation along the undelimited State border between Armenia and Azerbaijan recklessly provoked by Armenia with the aim of torpedoing the fragile post-conflict normalization process being pursued with the active engagement of relevant international actors, including the members of the Council. As such, it is our expectation that today's deliberations will send an appropriate message confirming the support of the international community for the search for negotiated diplomatic solutions to all issues pertaining to the normalization of inter-State relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Unfortunately, the statement we just heard from the representative of Armenia demonstrates the quite opposite intention of that Member State to abuse the Security Council to cover up its continuous and systematic efforts, both in rhetoric and actions, with the aim to evade the implementation of its commitments. We categorically reject the allegations made by the representative of Armenia. Those allegations, full of a standard set of fabrications, distortions and deceptions,

demonstrate that Armenia is far from complying with its international obligations and promoting peace, stability and cooperation in our region.

It is ironic that Armenia, the country that unleashed aggression against Azerbaijan, held the sovereign territories of my country under occupation for almost 30 years, carried out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale and committed other heinous crimes during the war, talks enthusiastically now about the very norms and principles it has consistently violated and makes appeals to the Security Council, whose resolutions it has refused to implement in its desire for endless impunity.

In fact, the lack of adequate attention and targeted measures to implement the demands of the Security Council has encouraged Armenia to consolidate the results of its unlawful use of force against Azerbaijan. The consequences of the aggression therefore remain unaddressed and are being further aggravated. It is the occupation of part of the State border for nearly 30 years that made delimitation and demarcation impossible. Had that happened in a timely manner, it would have prevented the latest escalation. Therefore, attempts by Armenia to portray itself as an ardent defender of the commonly agreed principles, norms and values are incapable of whitewashing the well-known, real image of that country as a persistent violator of international law and human rights.

That Armenia is yet to comply with its international obligations and commit itself genuinely to peace and stability in the region is evidenced by its continued use of obsolete or fake names for the localities in Azerbaijan. The references in the statement of the representative of Armenia to such names, which have no historical or legal grounds whatsoever, are a testament to his Government's continued territorial claims against Azerbaijan and apparent disregard for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. I have to emphasize that Armenia has no legal, political or moral grounds to make any statements concerning the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan, or on the matters falling within my country's exclusive sovereign rights, competence and responsibilities.

On the night of 12 to 13 September, Armenia's armed forces committed a large-scale act of military provocation in the direction of the Dashkasan, Kalbajar and Lachin districts of the Azerbaijan-Armenia State border, attempting to plant mines on the roads between the military positions of the Azerbaijani army, while taking advantage of the night-time and difficult terrain.

Furthermore, the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan were subjected to intense fire from different types of weapons, including mortars and artillery. As a result, that night, 42 servicemen of the Azerbaijani army and eight border guards were killed and significant damage was inflicted on military infrastructure. Azerbaijan took adequate and proportionate measures to neutralize the threat against its sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensure the safety of its military personnel and civilians who were involved in the ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction works in close vicinity to the State border.

The countermeasures taken in response to Armenia's provocations were limited and targeted at legitimate military objects. Contrary to the allegations we just heard from the representative of Armenia, the Ministry of Health of his country reported no casualties or injuries among civilians. It is also worth mentioning that Armenian social media are full of photographs depicting the so-called destruction of civilian objects allegedly on the territory of Armenia. In fact, those were photographs taken after missile strikes by Armenia's armed forces on the cities in Azerbaijan during the war in the fall of 2020, particularly in the city centre of Barda, which came under massive rocket fire on 28 October, causing the deaths of 21 civilians and injuring more than 70.

Taking into account the appeals of our international partners, a ceasefire agreement was reached, effective as of 9 a.m. on 13 September, Baku time. However, in a reckless attempt to further escalate the crisis and manipulate politics in front of the international community, the armed forces of Armenia continued attacks and provocations in the border areas using artillery and other heavy weapons. As a result of Armenia's violations of the established ceasefire, Azerbaijan suffered further losses and casualties among its military personnel. In addition, two civilians were seriously wounded. In total, 71 servicemen of the armed forces of Azerbaijan perished.

Of particular concern is that Armenia resorted to yet another gross violation of international humanitarian law by stationing its armed forces and heavy equipment within the residential areas in the vicinity of the border line. Needless to say, that was aimed at substantiating groundless accusations against Azerbaijan of shelling civilian infrastructure, which Armenia had been trying to spread through its propaganda channels since the early minutes of the escalation. Yet the armed forces

of Azerbaijan demonstrated the utmost restraint and professionalism and limited themselves to targeting, with high-precision weapons, exclusively the locations from which Armenia was firing its weapons, in order to suppress its attacks on the positions of Azerbaijan.

In view of Armenia's overt attempt at further escalation, Azerbaijan took several steps, including through contacts with relevant international partners, and demonstrated good faith and genuine will to restore the ceasefire that had already been agreed upon a day before. Among other things, the Azerbaijani side declared its willingness to return to Armenia the remains of its deceased military personnel on a unilateral basis and informed the International Committee of the Red Cross accordingly.

Eventually, the ceasefire was restored, effective 8 p.m. local time, which is noon Eastern Standard Time in the United States, on 14 September, through direct communication channels between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and since then it has been maintained, as confirmed by both sides. But now we have heard an absolutely provocative statement on the part of the Armenian representative.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan are now engaged in dealing with humanitarian consequences, including the retrieval of dead bodies. Azerbaijan reiterated to Armenia and the relevant humanitarian actors present on the ground its readiness to return the deceased Armenian soldiers unilaterally.

Moreover, as a result of the escalation, several Armenian soldiers fell under the control of Azerbaijan. They are being treated fully in line with the norms and principles of international humanitarian law, and necessary medical first aid was provided to those injured. Both sides are in contact with a view to facilitating their repatriation as soon as possible.

Therefore, there is ground for cautious optimism that common sense will finally prevail and yet another military adventure irresponsibly resorted to by Armenia will be overcome without further undermining the shaky normalization process between the two countries after an almost 30-year-long bloody conflict. In that context, it is more important than ever for the entire international community to contribute to this process and refrain from one-sided actions and statements that would complicate the already delicate situation.

The escalation at the State border was not an isolated incident, but another link in the chain of destabilizing

actions by Armenia over the past months. Suffice it to mention just a few.

On 3 August, Armenia resorted to military provocations in the direction of the Lachin district of Azerbaijan, which we reported to the Secretary-General and the Security Council in our letter issued under the symbol S/2022/638. From 2 September onwards, after the fourth trilateral meeting between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia mediated by the President of the European Council, Mr. Charles Michel, which was held on 31 August in Brussels, the armed forces of Armenia intensified fire against the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan along the border in the direction of the Kalbajar and Lachin districts.

Following the Brussels meeting, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia made provocative statements in connection with the anniversary of the so-called “independence” of the unlawful regime that Armenia established and maintained on the territories of Azerbaijan in the years of their occupation, while the Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia illegally visited the city of Khankendi in Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, in breach of the provisions of the trilateral statement regarding the cessation of all military activities, as well as of its other international obligations, Armenia continued to plant mines on a massive scale on the territory of Azerbaijan. Since 15 August, more than 1,300 anti-personnel mines have been found in the Lachin district alone. It was established that those mines were manufactured in Armenia in 2021 and, accordingly, laid on the territory of Azerbaijan after the signing of the trilateral statement on 10 November 2020.

Massive mine planting by Armenia on the territory of Azerbaijan continues along with Armenia’s consistent failure to share accurate and comprehensive information about the hundreds of thousands of landmines it indiscriminately laid on Azerbaijan’s territory during the conflict. As a result, after the signing of the trilateral statement, more than 240 citizens of Azerbaijan were killed or injured by mine explosions. Of those mine explosions, 134 — in other words, more than 50 per cent — took place in areas not covered by the minefield records shared by Armenia. That is indicative of the indiscriminate nature of mine planting by Armenia, in gross violation of the relevant international norms, and demonstrates the

true scale and gravity of the humanitarian threat facing Azerbaijani civilians.

Furthermore, in violation of article 4 of the trilateral statement, Armenia has not completely withdrawn the remnants of its armed forces and illegal armed formations from the territory of Azerbaijan where the peacekeepers of the Russian Federation are temporarily deployed.

There are also almost 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan, both civilians and members of the military, who remain missing in connection with the conflict. Armenia has failed to clarify the whereabouts of those persons who fell into its hands but have not been seen since.

Even after the end of the conflict, Armenia continues to allow racist hate groups formed for the specific purpose of inciting and committing violence against Azerbaijanis to operate openly and notoriously on its territory, in violation of international law and apparent disregard for the order on provisional measures handed down by the International Court of Justice on 7 December 2021 in the case on the *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Azerbaijan v. Armenia)*.

That is the overall context in the run-up to the recent large-scale military provocations on the border by Armenia.

Domestically, my Government prioritized the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the liberated territories and their reintegration into the country’s economy to ensure the safe return of the displaced population and high standards of living. Impressive large-scale post-conflict investment, rehabilitation and reconstruction projects are under way in close proximity to the areas where the armed hostilities recently erupted.

After almost three decades of occupation and denial of their basic human rights, the first group of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons (IDPs) recently returned to the newly constructed Aghali village in the liberated Zangilan district. Furthermore, Azerbaijan is about to complete the construction of a new airport in Zangilan close to the State border with Armenia.

The Government of Azerbaijan has also made consistent and successful efforts to promote interaction with local Armenian residents, including most recently

in addressing important water and energy supply issues in the region.

Consequently, Azerbaijan cannot be interested in any military activity in those areas that endanger such large-scale and costly rehabilitation and reconstruction projects that are being implemented with foreign investors. On the contrary, the escalation in the vicinity of newly liberated territories aims at preventing the restoration of the demographic situation in the conflict-affected territories by enabling the safe return of several hundreds of thousands Azerbaijani IDPs to their places of origin. In that regard, it is no coincidence that Armenia fully continues its militarization of the borderline areas in preparation for military provocations.

Furthermore, a few days ago, as a goodwill gesture, Azerbaijan released and handed over to Armenia five Armenian servicemen who were previously charged and imprisoned for criminal offences. That step was taken with a view to strengthening trust and improving the atmosphere for peace talks.

It is evident that, by resorting to political and military provocations, Armenia tried to backtrack from the implementation of the agreements reached between the two countries, undermine the process of the normalization of inter-State relations, involve third parties in bilateral issues and expand the geography of tensions for the purpose of sustaining its territorial claims and revanchist objectives.

Against that background, it is important that the international community resolutely condemn Armenia's policy and actions, which run counter to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, demand that Armenia strictly comply with its international obligations, focus on their implementation and engage in good faith in the results-oriented process of normalizing inter-State relations.

Ensuring lasting peace, development, progress and good-neighbourliness is the basis of Azerbaijan's vision for the future. Azerbaijan is firm in its determination to continue efforts towards advancing the rehabilitation,

reconstruction and reintegration of its conflict-affected territories, as well as ensuring justice and preventing and eliminating — by all legitimate means — any threat to the safety and well-being of its people and the State's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Azerbaijan is committed to regional peace, stability and development. The establishment of good-neighbourly relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan is key for building a secure, stable and prosperous South Caucasus through full-fledged regional normalization. Border delimitation and demarcation through bilateral commissions and the opening of transport communications are the two tracks of inter-State normalization complementing negotiations on a bilateral peace treaty.

Azerbaijan's position in that regard is clear, principled and consistent and is based on international law and established international practice. It is Azerbaijan that, right after the end of the conflict, initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations with Armenia, based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders, including through the signing of a peace treaty based on those principles.

Azerbaijan counts on the support of the international community for its efforts, both domestically and in terms of mitigating the consequences of the occupation of its territories for nearly 30 years, and on the inter-State track aimed at building good-neighbourly relations with Armenia.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our call for the international community to persuade Armenia to reciprocate Azerbaijan's offer, cease its political and military provocations, abandon its aggressive rhetoric and actions and engage in good faith in direct negotiations to find peaceful diplomatic solutions to all issues pertaining to inter-State relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

*The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.*