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Prevention of armed conflict****Security Council
Seventy-fifth year****Letter dated 16 July 2020 from the Permanent Representative of
Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

Upon the instructions of my Government, I am writing to express Armenia's grave concern regarding the situation in the north-eastern direction of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. On the afternoon of 12 July, the armed forces of Azerbaijan, in violation of the ceasefire regime, performed an attempt to infiltrate into the Armenian positions in the direction of Tavush region of Armenia. These acts of hostility were accompanied by the use of artillery, targeting civilian populations and essential infrastructures.

Against the backdrop of massive ceasefire violations, an Azerbaijani military unit sought to cross the border into the territory of Armenia and to seize an elevation, from which civilians of the nearby villages of Armenia could be easily targeted. Such overt aggression by Azerbaijan demonstrates a most irresponsible intention to expand the geography of hostilities beyond the line of contact and to involve different parts of the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border.

While Armenia called for immediate de-escalation, taking suppressive measures to contain the level of violence, Azerbaijan continued shelling an Armenian town and villages within its reach, with the use of heavy weaponry, including artillery and tanks, as well as unmanned aerial vehicles and large infantry units. The town of Berd and the bordering villages were subjected to deliberate attack by unmanned combat aerial vehicles. Targets included a textile factory in the region that manufactures personal protective equipment products to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In conducting attacks, the Azerbaijani military chose to place artillery close to the populated settlements, about 10 kilometres from the border, continuing its long-standing practice of using civilians as a shield.

Despite the mediation efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, resulting in a fragile ceasefire, in the early hours of July 16, the armed forces of Azerbaijan resumed attacks in the direction of the state border of Armenia. After suffering casualties and being repelled by the Armenian armed forces, the Azerbaijani units started to shell the villages of Aygepar, Nerkin Karmiraghbyur, Chinari and Movses of Tavush region, targeting the civilian population, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. Many



houses, infrastructures, the kindergarten of Aygepar and the waterline of Tavush-Nerkin Karmiraghbyur section were damaged.

Armenia condemns, in the strongest terms, the reckless actions by the Azerbaijani armed forces and deplores all the attempts to resort to the threat or use of force.

Facing internal political, economic and social challenges in the absence of democratic governance, the Azerbaijani leadership has once again chosen to employ the policy of mobilizing the population around the image of a foreign enemy, by way of instigating a major provocation on the border. This behaviour has been amplified by continuous anti-Armenian militaristic rhetoric at the highest political level, threatening an all-out war and with territorial claims extending to the capital of Armenia. Armenia has full capacity to exercise its inherent right to self-defence and remains committed to upholding peace and stability in the region. As Prime Minister Pashinyan has underscored, “the Armenian armed forces once again demonstrated that our country cannot be talked to from a position of strength”.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, in coordination with the Minister of Defence, has been in constant contact with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, since the very beginning of the escalation. The Armenian side deployed all the efforts through appropriate channels to maintain the ceasefire and to prevent further escalation of the situation.

I would like to recall, that, following the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan in April 2016, the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries proposed a set of measures aimed at de-escalation and stabilization of the situation, which included an expansion of the office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the creation of a ceasefire violation investigative mechanism. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan continues to reject the preventive measures, instead turning to violence, aggression and blackmail. Such irresponsible policies are being further exacerbated by systematic hate speech, warmongering and territorial claims. Today, Azerbaijan, at the level of the Ministry of Defence, even threatened to deliver a missile strike to the nuclear power plant in Metsamor. Such statements are rather indicative of the level of desperation and crisis of mind of the political-military leadership of this particular member of the international community acting as a menace to the entire region. The recent provocations make it crystal clear why Azerbaijan chose not to support the Secretary-General’s appeal for a global ceasefire, launched at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to help the world unite in efforts to defeat the virus.

It is, indeed, incomprehensible that, as the pandemic continues to ravage the world, the leadership of Azerbaijan has opted for warmongering and calamities over peace and recovery.

While calls from the international community were mainly about respect for the ceasefire, dialogue and restraint, it is disturbing to observe that Turkey, well in line with its incendiary regional policy, has on the highest level expressed its full and unilateral support to Azerbaijan, thus not only justifying the use of force by Azerbaijan on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, but also disseminating utterly false and misleading information. Turkey’s attempts to intervene in the neighbouring regions have already caused devastation and undermined the regional security and stability.

Armenia highly appreciates your statement of 13 July 2020, urging an immediate end to the fighting and calling for immediate steps to de-escalate the situation and refrain from provocative rhetoric. We remain committed to upholding peace and stability in the region and to focus all efforts on achieving de-escalation of

the situation on the ground. The international community shall act firmly to contain and prevent Azerbaijan's reckless behaviour, which is incompatible with international law and the core values of humanity and represents a serious challenge to regional peace and stability.

I kindly ask that the present letter be circulated as a document of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 31, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mher **Margaryan**
Ambassador, Permanent Representative
