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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1445th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 October 2023

On the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh

The European Union continues to follow with concern the dramatic situation arising from the mass exodus of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh following Azerbaijan's military operation of 19 and 20 September and the continuous months-long blockade of the Lachin corridor. To date, more than 100,600 people, which is almost the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh, have found refuge in Armenia.

In that regard, the European Union has taken note of the press release published following a mission to the region on Sunday, 1 October, that was led by Ms. Vladanka Andreeva, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Azerbaijan. In particular, the mission team found that only a tiny proportion of the local population remained in the city of Stepanakert; according to the interlocutors they had met, there were between 50 and 1,000 ethnic Armenians left in the region. The mission team reported being struck by the sudden manner in which the local population had left their homes and by the suffering which such an experience must have caused.

The European Union reiterates that the forced displacement of the civilian population by military or other means is unacceptable. Azerbaijan has the responsibility to ensure the rights and security of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh – including their right to live in their homes with dignity and without facing intimidation or discrimination – and to establish the conditions for their voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Their cultural heritage and property rights must also be guaranteed and protected by Azerbaijan.

For the moment, the priority is to provide humanitarian assistance to the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh who have fled to Armenia, and to ensure unhindered international access to Nagorno-Karabakh with a view to enabling independent monitoring of the situation on the ground. The European Commission, for its part, announced an additional package of humanitarian assistance on 26 September worth 5.2 million euros, which comes on top of the 20.8 million euros provided since 2020. The European Union and its Member States stand ready to provide supplementary emergency humanitarian assistance.

The European Union reaffirms its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Armenia. We call upon Azerbaijan to reaffirm its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Armenia in accordance with the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991.

The European Union remains determined to facilitate dialogue between all the parties with a view to ensuring a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the benefit of all the populations of the region.

The European Union will continue to keep a close watch on developments in the region. In that regard, it welcomes Tuesday's ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Albania¹ and Bosnia and Herzegovina¹, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.