

## Confidence Building Measures in the Field of Conventional Arms

### Report of the Republic of Armenia for 2019 *United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/51*

The United Nations resolution 73/51 is an important opportunity to examine the challenges related to confidence building measures at the regional and sub-regional level, to identify the sources of tensions and seek for solutions, thus preventing use of force.

Armenia has always been a staunch advocate for inclusive regional cooperation in every possible sphere. Regional cooperation promotes confidence and trust and creates conducive environment for resolution of political disputes. All-weather implementation of legally binding obligations and commitments on conventional arms control without political preconditions is an important cornerstone of such environment.

Guided by this principled approach, Armenia makes every effort to advance confidence building in the South Caucasus utilizing the multilateral frameworks of the UN, EU, OSCE, NATO PFP/EAPC as well as bilateral relations. Armenia has always demonstrated its readiness and political will to initiate projects aimed at development of inclusive regional cooperation in various fields, including conventional arms control.

Unfortunately, the prevailing security situation in the region continues to be characterized by uncontrolled military buildup by Azerbaijan, threat of use of force against Armenia and illegal land blockade of Armenia by Azerbaijan and Turkey aimed at its isolation from outer world.

The zero-sum game, pursued by Turkey and Azerbaijan and kinship security approaches hamper practical confidence building steps in the field of disarmament. Even worse, there is an extremely dangerous looming military buildup at the sub-regional level.

As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 according to the official information, provided by Azerbaijan, it significantly exceeds its ceilings in 4 out of 5 categories of major conventional arms established by the CFE Treaty, namely in battle tanks (525, permitted ceiling is 220), armored combat vehicles (427, permitted ceiling is 220), artillery (969, permitted ceiling is 285) and attack helicopters (59, permitted ceiling is 50).

The region of South Caucasus is a theatre of regular large-scale military activities of Azerbaijan in close vicinity to borders of Armenia. Last year Azerbaijan conducted 3 such military exercises, which were subject to notification. On March 12-17, military exercises in that country involved up to 25,000 military personnel, up to 250 tanks and other armored vehicles, up to 1000 missile and artillery systems up to 50 army and front-line aviation. On July 2-6 yet another unnotified large scale military exercise was conducted with the involvement of up to 20,000 military personnel, up to 120 tanks and other armored vehicles, more than 200 missile and artillery up to 30 army and front-line aviation. On September 17-22 exercises involved more than 20,000 military personnel; more than 200 tanks and other armoured vehicles; more than 120 missile and artillery systems and up to 30 military aircraft. These figures are fully based on the official website of the Azerbaijani MOD.

Major military activities, if conducted without prior notification, as required by the VD 2011, create an element of surprise, which under certain security environment can send a signal of readiness to use force. Therefore, they bear the potential of increasing tensions and leading to large scale hostilities. Persistent calls of Armenia to ensure compliance with the VD 2011 remain unanswered. Such ill-practice in sharp incompliance with the OSCE commitments, seriously undermines trust, security and stability in the region.

14 out of 28 brigades of Azerbaijani armed forces located at our borders are completely or partially excluded from inspection and verification, which undermines the credibility of data under annual military information provided by Azerbaijan.

The many-fold increase of Azerbaijan's military budget over the last decades and the persistent aggressive rhetoric of the Azerbaijani leadership, open territorial claims to Armenia and even its capital also heighten the tension in the region of the South Caucasus.

Azerbaijan attempts to justify its incompliance with the pretext of NK conflict, while the Vienna Document does not make any difference between peace, crisis or conflict situations. The OSCE has also developed status-neutral tools to promote CSBMs in conflict situations.

Armenia has extended full and unequivocal support to CSBMs in context of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Among many positive initiatives of Armenia to that end has been proposal to withdraw snipers along the Armenia-Azerbaijan state border and the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, establishment of direct contacts and hotlines between military commanders.

During the meeting between the Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of Azerbaijan at the end of September 2018 in Dushanbe practical agreements were reached on reducing risks of escalation, consolidating ceasefire and the establishment of an operational direct line between the sides.

Armenia supports implementation of agreements on expansion of the capacities of the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office and establishment of an investigative mechanism into ceasefire violations, reached at the Vienna and St.Petersburg summits in 2016. Realization of CSBMs would consolidate the ceasefire regime, established by 1994-1995 trilateral agreements between Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, thus restoring trust and creating conducive environment for advancing the peace process.