

Confidence building measures in the regional and sub-regional context

Report of the Republic of Armenia United Nations Resolution 66/38

The United Nations resolution 66/38 is an important mechanism to exchange views and approaches on confidence building measures at the regional and sub-regional level, to identify the principal problems in the sphere and seek for solutions.

Armenia has always advocated the principle of regional cooperation in every possible sphere, which is a significant contributor to confidence building. The settlement of regional tensions is possible only through cooperation, since it creates the much needed environment of mutual trust thus facilitating the solution of even the most protracted and long lasting problems.

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

Unfortunately, one can witness a very dangerous situation in the region, which is characterized by arms race, closed borders and blockade, permanent threat of use of force, ceasefire violations and wide anti-Armenian propaganda by Armenia's immediate neighbors to the East and West aimed at isolation. The ill-perceived political motivations of Turkey and Azerbaijan do not allow taking practical confidence building steps in the fields of regional security, disarmament, conflict settlement, etc.

According to official information on implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), as of January 1, 2012 Azerbaijan significantly exceeds its established ceilings in three categories of Treaty Limited Equipment. The Azerbaijani holdings in battle tanks are 381 (permitted ceiling is 220) and in artillery are 516 (permitted ceiling is 285). In 2011 there has been a sizeable increase of holdings in artillery - 47 as well as in the category of attack helicopters - 3 to 5 and armored combat vehicles - 106. Azerbaijan deliberately failed to reflect the exceeding of ceiling of armored combat vehicles - 287 against 220 permitted by the CFE Treaty. Azerbaijan has significantly increased its military budget over the last years (the defence budget for 2012 makes \$3.47 billion). In fact the region is at the edge of a full scale war, which can be unleashed by Azerbaijan at any moment.

The full and unconditional implementation of the legally binding CFE Treaty is not only the main instrument of the conventional arms control but also one of the cornerstones of confidence building measures in the region, and the negligent position of Azerbaijan in this regard has a very negative impact on the efforts of Armenia to promote an atmosphere of trust and cooperation in the region.

The harsh anti-Armenian aggressive rhetoric of the Azerbaijani leadership also heightens the tension in the region of the South Caucasus and seriously undermines the negotiation process aimed at the peaceful settlement of existing problems, particularly the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The Azerbaijani leadership frustrates any attempts of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh Republic, as well as those of international community to materialize initiatives of

regional cooperation and confidence building. Even more, Azerbaijan is conducting unashamed political course directed to denigration of the historic and cultural Armenian heritage in the region. Groundless statements that the territory of Armenia and its capital are parts of the so called “ancient” Azerbaijan are vivid manifestations of that policy.

Exclusion from regional projects aimed at complete economic, and transport isolation of Armenia, rejection of any people-to-people contacts are also part of the deplorable mindset of negation.

The confidence and security building measures are of particular significance in conflict resolution. Regrettably, Azerbaijan refuses to remove from the line of contact snipers that claim several dozens of lives every year. The Azeri side ignores the persistent calls of the Secretary General of the UN, the Chairman in Office of the OSCE, Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group to this effect. Azerbaijan tries to withdraw from an agreement to set up an investigative mechanism into ceasefire violations, which was the outcome of the Sochi Summit of the Presidents of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan on 2 March 2011. Thus, Azerbaijan denies all the attempts to consolidate the ceasefire regime.

Armenia stands ready for open, constructive and regular dialogue with its neighbour to create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, which will enable us to move forward in the process of settlement of persisting problems in the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations.