# Press release on the briefing for the diplomatic corps accredited in the Republic of Azerbaijan on the latest situation in the region

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan • 8 September 2023*

*[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Initiative]*

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On 8 September 2023, a briefing for the diplomatic corps accredited in Azerbaijan was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with participation of Minister of Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan-Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs of the Presidential Administration Hikmat Hajiyev, and Representative of the President of Azerbaijan on special assignments Elchin Amirbayov.

During the briefing the following major points were highlighted:

- The normalization process between Azerbaijan and Armenia faces serious challenges;

- What we observe in the behavior of the Armenian side is the replication of the pattern that has been typical for this country for 30 years: imitation of talks, back-stepping from previous agreements, and escaping from implementation of undertaken commitments through resorting to various political, military and other provocations;

- Armenia is engaged in a world-wide smear campaign against Azerbaijan, exploits all opportunities to abuse the individual states and international organizations against Azerbaijan on the basis of false and groundless allegations on “blockade” or “humanitarian crisis”.

- Before going into specific details, one thing needs to be highlighted and underlined: in all engagements through different international actors, such the Russian Federation, United States, European Union or ICRC, Armenia escapes from real negotiations, behaves insincerely, and torpedoes all previously reached arrangements and understandings.

- Armenia pursues one goal: to sustain separatism in the territory of Azerbaijan through all possible ideological, political, military, financial and other means. For this purpose, Armenia tries to win time and escapes from real steps to allow progress in negotiation in all tracks;

- The situation with respect to the delivery of goods to the Garabagh region to meet the needs of Armenian residents is a clear example, in this respect. The history of

negotiations in this respect conducted through different third-parties proves one thing: Armenia is not interested in seeking solutions at the negotiation table:

- Armenia abused the Lachin road for almost two and half years for illegal military and other purposes. All our calls were neglected and no action was taken to address Azerbaijan's legitimate and fact-based concerns;

- On April 23, 2023, Azerbaijan established a border check point on the state border as a mean to prevent the abuse of the road while ensuring rightful, transparent and regulated passage across the border. Despite all the allegations the check point functioned in an exemplary manner under very sensitive conditions;

- Azerbaijan consistently appealed to the Armenian side for the establishment of working contacts between the relevant state structures, customs and border services to ensure that the cross-border passages are facilitated in a smooth manner. These were not reciprocated.

- Armenia continued to challenge the very right of Azerbaijan to establish a check point on its border, tried to exploit the International Court of Justice and other instances. Having failed in all such attempts and in view of intensified use of the check point by local Armenian residents, Armenia resorted to an open military provocation on June 15. It put under the risk the residents passing through the check-point, as well the staff of the ICRC which were in close vicinity to conduct a pre-planned medical evacuation operation;

- This followed by reckless attempt for smuggling in ICRC-hired vehicles. This was acknowledged by the ICRC;

- Despite these provocations, passage through the check point for medical evacuations and other urgent purposes continuous to date. Since June 15, ICRC has conducted 27 operations, 312 Armenian residents accompanied by 208 persons (total 520) travelled to Armenia, while 380 persons returned to Garabagh having completed their treatment. For these operations, the passage of 425 vehicles of ICRC was registered in both directions. While returning back to Garabagh, they also bring essential goods, such as medicines, baby formula. Thus, the claim that since June 15 no good is transferred to Garabagh has no basis, and simply is not true.

- While facilitating passages through the checkpoint, Azerbaijan officially offered the use of other roads for the delivery of goods to meet the needs of local residents;

- While continuing to facilitate the passage through the check point for medical evacuations and other urgent purposes, Azerbaijan officially

offered the use of other roads for the delivery of goods to meet the needs of local residents;

- This was extensively discussed at the meeting of the leaders on July 15 with participation of Charles Michel. It was not coincidence that this matter was reflected in the statement of Mr. Michel following the meeting;

- On July 25, in Moscow, the use of multiple roads in a synchronized manner was again topic of discussions at the trilateral meeting of the Foreign Ministers. It was a formula proposed by the Russian side. Azerbaijan expressed its readiness to consider such an option and eventually gave its consent. Armenia demonstratively escaped from concrete discussions;

- Instead, the following day, Armenia resorted to another pre-planned provocation by sending a so-called "humanitarian convoy" to the border. This was pure provocation to manipulate international public opinion and to create a ground for further steps;

- The Russian Federation, United States and the European Union engaged intensively with the parties to facilitate the implementation of the synchronized use of Aghdam-Khankendi and Lachin-Khankendi roads, and organization of meeting between central Government's special representative and local residents.

- Finally, on August 4 agreements were reached with respect to both issues. Sequential opening of roads and organization of meeting in Yevlakh were agreed. All involved stakeholders, including the ICRC and peacekeepers were prepared to facilitate the implementation. Yet, again at last moment the Armenian side back-tracked from both agreements by putting politically motivated, illegitimate pretexts;

- This was followed by intensified smear campaign world-wide to lay a ground for the UNSC engagement into the matter. Armenia's attempt to exploit the UNSC for anti-Azerbaijani steps failed. Instead, the majority of UNSC members spoke against the politicization of the humanitarian delivery, called for opening of all routes for such delivery and underlined the necessity for direct dialogue;

- Azerbaijan continued engagement with all partners to realize the well-received algorithm of synchronized use of Aghdam-Khankendi and Lachin-Khankendi roads.

- During recent high-level contacts with the United States the simultaneous use of the Aghdam-Khankendi and Lachin roads was again discussed in detail. In order to accommodate the concern of the Armenian side communicated through the American side, Azerbaijan agreed to change

the sequential opening of the roads into simultaneous delivery of goods through the both roads. The US-side positively received this as a sign of constructiveness. Relevant US negotiators were tasked to take this message back to the Armenian side and work towards realization of the deal. Again, it failed to be materialized;

    - Azerbaijani National Red Crescent Society's two trucks wait on the ground to be able to deliver the flour to the Armenian residents;

- Azerbaijan is interested in finding a solution and has proved it in its sincere engagement with all which offered their good offices and mediation services. In all instances, without exception, the Armenian side violated previously reached agreements under different pretexts. The true reason is one and the same: to prolong the situation, artificially ignite tension and ultimately derail the normalization process;

- One thing is crystal clear and there should be no doubt on that: what Armenia tries to impose on international community as "humanitarian" matter, is indeed a brazen political campaign targeting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

- If the situation were humanitarian, it could have been solved weeks ago on the basis of the proposal of synchronized use of multiple roads. Under pretext of humanitarian needs of the Armenian residents of the Garabagh region, Armenia in essence took hostage these people to its policy of separatism and continues to spread the idea of intolerance and hatred;

- As a matter of fact, Armenia has consistently put obstructions to the ICRC Azerbaijan Delegation to exercise its mandate too;

- The situation around the issue of delivery of goods is not isolated from Armenia's increased military and political provocations targeting Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

- Armenia's close to 10 thousand strong armed forces continues to illegally stationed in the territory of Azerbaijan. Dozens of tanks and other armored vehicles, more than two hundred heavy artillery pieces, including multiple rocket launchers, dozens of different type of radio electronic warfare equipment, close to two hundred mortars are currently deployed in the territory of Azerbaijan where the Russian peacekeeping contingent has been temporarily deployed;

- Armenia provides technical, military, logistical and financial support to sustain these forces in violation of its obligations and commitments. The armed formations in Azerbaijan's territory are financed directly from the state budget of Armenia;

- Recent days have witnessed even more intensified military provocations accompanied by increased military build-up, both along the undelimited border and in the Garabagh region. Armenia digs new trenches, builds fortifications and accumulates personnel and equipment in an apparent effort to go into another military adventure;

- Despite its earlier statement regarding Armenia's recognition of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan that includes the Garabagh region, the Prime Minister of Armenia took yet another extremely provocative step by issuing a so-called "congratulatory message" on the occasion of the so-called anniversary of the establishment of the illegal puppet structure in the territory of Azerbaijan.

- The Prime Minister once more referred to the so-called "right to self-determination of Armenian residents" and confirmed that Armenia would continue intervene with issues related to these residents under the pretext of their security and rights. As such, he essentially nullified his previous statement on the recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan;

- Just to recall that this has been for 30 years used by Armenia to maintain the occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan. The Prime Minister's message is nothing other than yet another confirmation that Armenia has not abandoned territorial claims against Azerbaijan, it has no intention to stop fueling separatism in our territory by all available means, including by providing political, military and financial support;

- Armenian diplomatic missions accredited at different international organizations continue to distribute different types of documents on behalf of the illegal regime, again despite the Armenia's expressed recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan;

- The planned so-called "elections" of the "president" of this illegal entity is yet another extremely provocative step. This is a clear violation of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, is by no means admissible and tolerable;

- The mentioned provocations by Armenia negatively affects the normalization process, and undermine efforts of international actors in this regard. Adequate understanding of the risks and threats posed by Armenia's irresponsible and destructive behavior, and appropriate measures to persuade Armenia to refrain from such actions is required;

- Azerbaijan's commitment to the peace process is strong and has been proven through consistent steps we have been taking since November 2020. Our determination to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity is equally firm and resolute.