Excerpts from TASS interview with Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan

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[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Initiative]

On the content of negotiations:

- "As you know, Azerbaijan and Armenia are negotiating to sign a peace treaty based on five basic principles proposed by Azerbaijan and accepted by Armenia."
- "Mutual recognition of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the two countries and a legal obligation not to make related claims in the future is the cornerstone of these principles. Unfortunately, there have be recently been a number of actions by the Armenian leadership, among which especially the congratulations on September 2 by the Prime Minister of Armenia to the unrecognized illegal regime in Karabakh on the occasion of 'independence day', have caused serious damage to the peace process."

On the issue of landmines:

- "Along the entire perimeter of the Armenian-fueled 'gray zone' in Karabakh, Armenian illegal armed groups are carrying out massive mining of our territories; as if the more than 1 million mines laid by Armenia on our lands before 2020 were not enough for them. It can be said that Armenia uses mines as weapons of mass destruction against Azerbaijanis—in just the period after the 44-day war in 2020, more than 300 of our citizens have become victims of mine terror."

On the status of negotiations:

- "At the moment, the peace process is being slowed down due to the unconstructive and insincere position of the Armenian political leadership. Under the pretext of the non-existent 'blockade' of the Lachin road, a large-scale disinformation campaign was launched against Azerbaijan, which is coordinated by Yerevan and the Armenian diaspora in different countries of the world, especially in the West."
- "Now the main obstacle to the peace process is the fact that Armenia continues to maintain a financially and military-politically illegal regime on our territory. It is the illegal regime in Khankendi that blocks the simultaneous opening of the Aghdam and Lachin routes, refuses to accept food cargo from Azerbaijan, justifying this with cavernous racist motives that have no place in the civilized world. Also, the illegal regime is torpedoing attempts at dialogue between the central government of Azerbaijan and the Armenian ethnic minority living in Karabakh, despite Baku's repeated invitations to such contacts."

On redlines in peace negotiations:

- "We will not discuss issues that call into question the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan either with Armenia or with any third country. Attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of our state, including by pushing the topic of creating some kind of 'international mechanisms' for dialogue between the central government of Azerbaijan and the ethnic Armenian minority in Karabakh, are doomed to failure. Karabakh is an internal issue of Azerbaijan, and any attempts to dispute this are counterproductive from the viewpoint of prospects for achieving sustainable peace in the region."
- "We still hope for the signing of a peace treaty before the end of this year and call upon Armenia's political leadership to take the main step—to formally (with their signature on the peace treaty) record their recognition of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, including the Karabakh economic region of our republic, and to undertake to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of our republic."

On the role of third parties in the peace process:

- "As for the activities of international mediators, we highly appreciate their contribution to the normalization of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations. The role of Russia in this process, whose active mediation ensured the signing of a trilateral agreement in November 2020 that put an end to large-scale hostilities, is extremely important. The European Union and the United States are also making their contribution to the negotiation process. In general, each of the negotiation tracks is unique in its own way and helps facilitate dialogue between Baku and Yerevan on the most problematic issues."