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Sent: Monday, December 7, 2020 5:53 PM
To: Tavlarides, Mark <mtavlarides@bgrdc.com>
Subject: Azerbaijan Update

Good afternoon,

I wanted to share the attached letter from Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the U.S. Elin Suleymanov regarding the current situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The letter notes the November 10 ceasefire agreement and calls for a forward-looking vision to “seize the historic opportunity to ensure stability, security and prosperity at the world’s strategic crossroads in the South Caucasus.”

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,
Mark

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Azərbaycan Respublikasının Səfiri
Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan

12.07.2020

Dear Honorable Representative,

With the ceasefire agreement signed on November 10, our region is facing a new reality of Azerbaijan's internationally-recognized territories liberated, four United Nations Security Council resolutions fulfilled, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons able to return to their homes and unprecedented opportunities emerging for regional cooperation.

President Aliyev has repeatedly stated that the opening of all communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan establishes a basis for cooperation and peaceful development. This is a chance for Armenia to finally graduate into a meaningfully independent nation in peace with its neighbors and to focus on its own growth.

At the same time, the Armenian community in the Nagorno-Karabakh region will be provided all the rights and benefits and enjoy safety and security as citizens of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has never targeted civilian population. Moreover, in fact, despite significant military superiority and ability to do so, Azerbaijani military did not advance into the main Armenian-populated areas in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Nor has Azerbaijan, unlike Armenia during its illegal offensive in 1992-1994, committed ethnic cleansing. On the contrary, we see the Armenian community in the region as our citizens. In his public addresses, President Aliyev repeatedly calls for coexistence and cooperation between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

Reconciliation, economic development and normalization are not easy tasks following three decades of illegal occupation and Armenia's consistent undermining of the international mediation format, as well as military provocations earlier this year, including the July 12 attack across the international border with Azerbaijan. Yet, these are necessary steps for the future of our entire region, including for Armenia. We believe the international community, including the United States can play a very positive role to that end.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan need to focus now on the future of our people and our shared region. Such forward-looking vision is the only way to seize the historic opportunity to ensure stability, security and prosperity at the world's strategic crossroads in the South Caucasus. On the contrary, focusing on the history of grievances would only perpetuate conflict.

At the same, to establish a lasting peace, Armenia must overcome some of the ideological extremes and dangerous, divisive narratives currently informing Armenian political discourse and activity. The well-documented evidence of widespread intentional destruction and radical statements are both deeply disturbing and counterproductive. Examples of these include reckless calls for attacking regional energy infrastructure and using spent fuel of the Armenian nuclear power plant in Metsamor to create an arsenal of "dirty bombs" against Azerbaijan.

We should also be cautious regarding propaganda attempts to introduce religious and confessional dimensions into the conflict. Azerbaijan is well known as a diverse, inclusive nation with multi-ethnic, multi-confessional character and is home to the largest Jewish community in a Muslim country as well as numerous Christian denominations. Azerbaijan has made a commitment to protecting all cultural sites on its territory. Protection of all cultural heritage is a highly sensitive and important issue and should not be used to promote divisive and confrontational narratives.

Retreating Armenian forces also planted large amounts of landmines, booby-traps, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) the liberated territories, including in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, that have recently killed several Azerbaijani civilians and military personnel in the region. These facts once again attest that the multi-million-dollar funding for "demining" by the U.S. in the Nagorno-Karabakh region through the HALO Trust did not yield results, since Armenian forces intentionally and concurrently continued to plant mines.

Furthermore, as Armenia withdraws its troops from the illegally occupied Azerbaijani territories, there are wide-spread instances of destruction of property and infrastructure, mass cutting of the trees, initiating house and forest fires, as well as killing animals that will inevitably have a damaging effect on natural ecosystems of those areas.

After decades of displacement, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani IDPs, who were forcefully expelled from their homes, are returning to their homeland. We believe that now all efforts must focus to bring prosperity into the region.

I stand ready to answer any questions you may have and look forward to working with you towards achieving lasting peace for the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Elin Suleymanov', written in a cursive style.

Elin Suleymanov

Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan