



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

NOV 12 2015

The Honorable  
Edward R. Royce, Chairman  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your October 26 letter conveying your support for the OSCE Minsk Group's efforts to mediate a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as sharing your recommendations on how to de-escalate tensions in the region. As a Co-Chair of the Minsk Group, the United States has played an active role in mediating a comprehensive settlement of this long-standing conflict, the resolution of which would usher in a new era of peace and prosperity for the people of the South Caucasus.

The United States supports proposals to withdraw snipers, expand OSCE's role via an OSCE investigation mechanism, and deploy sensors along the Line of Contact and the Armenia-Azerbaijan international border. We have been a strong advocate in the Minsk Group process for these confidence-building measures, which we believe would reduce violence in areas affected by the conflict. Without a mechanism to verify ceasefire allegations or sensors to pinpoint the location of gunfire, it is difficult for the Co-Chairs to make specific accusations against one side's use of violence. As the sides now use mortars and other heavy weaponry that inflict casualties on innocent civilians, the urgency of implementing such measures has never been greater. That is why the U.S. Co-Chair, Ambassador James Warlick, together with his Russian and French counterparts, is discussing these proposals with the sides at the highest levels.

As an essential part of the peace process, we encourage dialogue between the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh. We also support other people-to-people programs that bring Armenians and Azerbaijanis together. These contacts are essential to build trust between neighboring societies that have had little contact with one another for over 20 years. Like the aforementioned security mechanisms, dialogue would contribute to creating a more stable and constructive atmosphere for advancing negotiations on a comprehensive settlement.

The United States is committed to a peaceful resolution based on the principles enshrined in the OSCE's Helsinki Final Act, particularly those related to the non-use of force or threat of force, territorial integrity, and equal rights and self-determination of peoples. We are hopeful we will move closer to this goal following the upcoming summit between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan under the auspices of the Co-Chairs.

We appreciate your deep interest in bringing peace to the region. We hope you will join the United States and the Co-Chairs to support comprehensive negotiations that can lead to the conclusion of a peace agreement. Intensified diplomatic engagement at all levels will help us reach the transformational peace Armenians and Azerbaijanis deserve. We will continue our efforts to mediate a lasting settlement. Please do not hesitate to contact us again if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julia Frifield  
Assistant Secretary  
Legislative Affairs