



Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

12.10.2009

Regarding the signing on the 10th of October in Switzerland of the Protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia, and the Protocol on the development of relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan considers it necessary to state the following.

The position of the Azerbaijani side on this issue is unequivocal. In 1993, Turkey closed its borders with Armenia in protest against the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories by Armenia and its aggression against Azerbaijan. As the result of Armenian aggression, twenty percent of the territories of Azerbaijan were occupied, about one million Azerbaijani citizens were subjected to ethnic cleansing and became refugees and internally displaced persons, cultural and historical heritage of Azerbaijan was destroyed in the occupied areas. Since then, Armenia has ignored numerous resolutions and documents adopted by the UN Security Council and its General Assembly, OSCE, PACE, OIC and other international organizations, that condemned the aggressive policy of Armenia, demanded the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories and the return of internally displaced persons to their native lands, and no progress in eliminating the results of this aggression has been reached.

In connection with this matter, the Azerbaijani side refers to numerous statements by senior officials of the Republic of Turkey, in particular the statement by Prime Minister Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan made on May 14, 2009 in the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan: "Turkey closed its borders with Armenia after its occupation of Azerbaijani lands. The borders can be opened only after the occupation is over. As long as our Azerbaijani brothers are not satisfied, we will not retreat one step from this position. These issues are interconnected and cannot be considered separately", and his statement made on September 17, 2009 to the Turkish media during the breaking of a fast (iftar): "We can not open the borders until the problems between Azerbaijan and Armenia are resolved ... We can not take such a step unless the problem is solved."

As we have repeatedly noted, establishment of relations between states is in principle their sovereign right. However, mending relations between Turkey and Armenia before the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories directly contradicts the national interests of Azerbaijan and overshadows the spirit of brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey built on deep historical roots. Taking into the consideration the importance of opening all borders and communications in the region, Azerbaijan is of the opinion that the one-sided opening of Turkish-Armenian border will put into question the architecture of peace and security in the region.