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The Subsequent Return to Sochi Platform: New Opportunities for Sustainable Peace in the South Caucasus

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Following the Russian-brokered peace deal in November 10, 2020, in a way towards the sustainability of peace building process and peace situation in the South Caucasus along with the newly emerging politically and economically viable opportunities, the process has been drawing the attention of regional and international stakeholders with multidirectional views and varying degrees of contribution. In the aftermath of Prague meeting on the heels of recent escalations along the Armenia and Azerbaijani border, which revealed to be another willing step by the EU in this vein though French President's biased approach has been reiterated, activism from the side of Russian media is being observed and the return to Sochi Platform with the mediation the President of the Russian Federation in the trilateral meeting with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and with the Prime Minister of Republic of Armenia was held in the city of Sochi on October 31 which is considered of exceptional importance to ensure the implementation of the agreements of 9 November 2020, 11 January and 26 November 2021.

All sides expressed their strong commitment to demonstrate serious compliance with the agreements of interest for substantial normalization of Azerbaijan-Armenia relations bringing peace, stability, security and sustainable economic development in the region of which benefits could certainly expand beyond the borders, and agreed to further continue to end the remaining task. With recently increasing intervention of Russia, key contribution of the Russian peacekeeping forces to ensuring safety in the zone of deployment is strongly emphasized including their contribution to the post-war reconstruction process.

In addition, abstention from the application of force or threat in inter-state relations was also shown. The striking relevance of the recent meeting perks up in the form of mutual recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders in accordance with the UN Charter and the *Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991* in which the opposite side's conformity to the recognition

of the Karabakh region as an integral part of Azerbaijan Republic is observed. Moreover, the importance of active preparation for the signing of a peace treaty between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia in order to achieve sustainable and lasting peace in the region is seen. On the basis of the currently developed proposals, it was agreed to continue the search for acceptable solutions.

The methods of people to people's contacts are apparent as well as they emphasized the importance of creating a positive atmosphere between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia to continue the dialogue at the level of the representatives of the public, expert communities in order to strengthen confidence between the citizens of the two countries. Both sides positively evaluated the preparedness of Russian Federation to continue to contribute in every possible way to the normalization of relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia for the benefits of all parties.

The recent Sochi meeting has been instilled in the history as a remarkable process with comprehensive compliance to the interests and efforts of Azerbaijan of which format's emphasis related to the normalization of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations with serious steps to be taken rather than the context of Karabakh region serving the interest of Azerbaijan. The *single standard approach* in achieving the sustainable peace deal in South Caucasus for the interests of all sides concerned furthermore entered into the consensus in reaching agreement: *The possibility of any agreement is upheld within the recognition of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan* that has been accepted by Armenia, while the President of Azerbaijan recited the end of the war opening a prospective avenue for talks development of all nations.

In certain case, the way to substantial development in this direction goes not only through the hands of Azerbaijani government, but also through the Armenian one. Armenia may make an effort to undermine the responsibility for recognizing Karabakh as formally part of Azerbaijan while simultaneously the process is being warded off to a certain extent by the developments at international level.

As mentioned, reference to Alma-Ata agreement bolsters the position of Azerbaijan further indicating that Azerbaijan in all platforms including in Sochi meeting maintains its unilaterally constructive and fair position under the auspices of powerful diplomacy. These steps are deemed to be significant in bringing Azerbaijan to reaching a peace deal that will certainly result in the benefits for many as all parties including the European Union with its active engagement in the process serve for the solution of the conflict with single standards.

In economic terms, the peace deal is being distinguished with numerous perspectives to be taken into account. This could be new door of opportunities for trade and investment ranging from tourism to mining, high tech sectors in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan. The creation of a new Karabakh economic region was important factor for the restoration and rapid development of the historical Karabakh region, which has huge economic potential at multiple directions. On the other hand, the establishment of the East Zangazur economic region on the border with Armenia serves the same purpose contributing to the integration of the region to Euro Asia. Furthermore, the existence of the internationally important logistics line at the inter-wined location of the regional countries can boost the geopolitical and geo-economic relevance of the region leading to new revenue streams for all the countries involved and providing more financially affordable alternatives for European countries that can reinforce the intercontinental relations within the eastern partnership program. Moreover,

economic evaluation from another perspective unveils Green Energy Potential of Azerbaijan generates a new orientation to the development and international stance of Azerbaijan with a huge potential of investment inflows.

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