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**FRANCE IS READY TO HOST MEETING BETWEEN AZERBAIJANI AND ARMENIAN PRESIDENTS ON ITS TERRITORY**

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APA

France is ready to host meeting between Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents on its territory, French co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, Stéphane Visconti, said following the meeting with leader of the separatist regime in Nagorno-Karabakh region, Bako Sahakyan, in Khankendi, APA reports quoting news.am.

Asked whether a high-level meeting is possible, the French diplomat said that as soon as the conditions are created, this will happen. According to him, this may take place in France: The French side has expressed willingness to arrange the meeting on its territory or elsewhere, but, of course, this should be productive, Visconti added.

The mediator underscored the importance of observing the ceasefire regime, noting that they would first of all very much like there to be no ceasefire violations. At the same time, it is necessary to move forward, he said.

Referring to the cooperation with the Minsk Group, Visconti noted that the work is underway although not everyone sees and knows this. He declined to provide details, noting that the talks are confidential, but, according to him, this doesn't mean that nothing is being done.

The co-chair also added that the process is complex, and at the same time the dialogue between the presidents of the co-chairing states is very intense.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict entered its modern phase when the Armenian SRR made territorial claims against the Azerbaijani SSR in 1988.

A fierce war broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. As a result of the war, Armenian armed forces occupied some 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory which includes Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts (Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli and Zangilan), and over a million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced people.

The military operations finally came to an end when Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a ceasefire agreement in Bishkek in 1994.

Dealing with the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the OSCE Minsk Group, which was created after the meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Helsinki on 24 March 1992. The Groups members include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, the United States, France, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Belarus, Finland and Sweden.

Besides, the OSCE Minsk Group has a co-chairmanship institution, comprised of Russian, US and French co-chairs, which began operating in 1996.

Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 of the UN Security Council, which were passed in short intervals in 1993, and other resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly, PACE, OSCE, OIC, and other organizations require Armenia to unconditionally withdraw its troops from Nagorno-Karabakh.

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Kaynak/Source: