# FIRST TALKS BETWEEN BAKU AND NEW YEREVAN ON KARABAKH HELD IN BRUSSELS

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Azerbaijans Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and Foreign Minister of Armenia Zograb Mnatsakanyan held their first meeting in Brussels on July 11. The meeting took place with the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs (Igor Popov of Russia, Stefan Visconti of France and Andrew Schofer of the US), spokesman for the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry Hikmat Hajiyev said.

The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk also attended the meeting. It lasted for about 4 hours. Prior to this meeting, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov met with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

During the meeting, the negotiation process on the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict was comprehensively discussed and the continuation of the existing format of negotiations was noted.

"They also exchanged views on the next steps to advance the negotiation process and the action plans of the co-chairs," Trend cited Hajiyev as saying.

The meeting of the two countries foreign ministers was familiarizing, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said today.

"Mnatsakanyan has noted there is no alternative to the negotiating process and stressed the importance of steps promoting an atmosphere of peace, building mutual confidence, and de-escalating tensions, as well as the commitment to the ceasefire and the renouncement of aggressive rhetoric," the press service of the Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"The realistic and constructive participation of all parties to the conflict is vital for the efficiency of efforts towards lasting peace," Interfax cited Mnatsakanyan as saying.

In addition, Mnatsakanyan thanked the co-chairs for organization of the meeting and stressed the importance of the peaceful process and the necessity of maintenance of the dynamics of the negotiations brokered by the organization.

Head of the expert council of Baku Network, Elkhan Alasgarov, speaking with Vestnik Kavkaza, noted that after Nikol Pashinyan's team came to power, the scenario of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which was blocked by Sargsyan's 'party of war', was actualized, but the following months showed that the new Yerevan government has chosen to retain the

occupation policy of its predecessors.

"Azerbaijan's position is clear: we want a peaceful settlement of the conflict, which requires active negotiations. Unfortunately, after Pashinyan came to power, instead of further promoting the settlement, Armenia proposed new preconditions, one of which was to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh separatists as a negotiating side. This condition is unacceptable, as it puts an end to the long negotiation process within the framework of the Minsk Group, since the road map for the settlement has long existed, it should be implemented, but the addition of some new persons will cancel all the work done," Elkhan Alasgarov explained.

"Minister Mnatsakanyan said that the purpose of the meeting is holding the meeting to maintain the dialogue. While Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister said more clearly that the main task of Yerevan is to delay the negotiation process and prevent the formation of a productive negotiating atmosphere," the head of the expert council of Baku Network added.

"We hope that the Armenian side will understand that the events in Armenia that led to the overthrow of Serzh Sargsyan were caused by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenia has already started to realize, but simply do not want to admit that the lack of the country's development is the result of the policy of occupation of the Azerbaijani territories. They wanted to have everything, but in the end they only lost what they had, Armenia has weakened economically, politically and militarily," the expert said.

"Armenia's goal in Brussels was the continuation of formal participation in the negotiations. In addition, the new Armenian leadership arrived in Brussels to explore new sources of financing, I think that new Yerevan will still not be able to achieve these two goals simultaneously: European countries want Armenia to be a real negotiator. I think we will have to wait for a long time to see the Armenian leadership's understanding that only the resolution of the Karabakh conflict will give a green light to the development of Armenia," Elkhan Alasgarov concluded.

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