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## **OSCE MG CO-CHAIRS TO PRESENT AZERBAIJAN, ARMENIA PROPOSALS OVER PRISONERS OF WAR**

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The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs will present the parties of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the proposals in connection with prisoners of war during the visit to the region in late May, the Russian Foreign Ministry toldTrendon May 23.

The Russian Foreign Ministry was responding to the question on Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement about exchanging prisoners of war all for all, as a way of establishing an atmosphere of trust in conflict zones and the projection on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement.

The ministry reminded that the presidents of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan talked about strengthening of the confidence-building measures in the military field during the trilateral meeting in October 2010 in Astrakhan.

"For this purpose, an agreement was reached on the exchange of prisoners of war with the assistance of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and the International Committee of the Red Cross,' the ministry said. 'Baku and Yerevan agreed to follow this approach in the future, taking into account only the humanitarian nature of such issues. We think that this agreement remains relevant. The consultations on the exchange of prisoners of war are underway."

The Russian Foreign Ministry stressed that to improve the conditions of stay of prisoners of war on the territory of the parties, during the recent ministerial meeting in Moscow the Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers confirmed their readiness on a reciprocal basis to take measures to allow relatives to visit them.

"The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs prepared the corresponding proposals on this issue and they intend to present Azerbaijan and Armenia these proposals during their visit to the region in late May," the ministry said.

The conflict between the two South Caucasus countries began in 1988 when Armenia made territorial claims against Azerbaijan. As a result of the ensuing war, in 1992 Armenian armed forces occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven surrounding districts.

The 1994 ceasefire agreement was followed by peace negotiations. Armenia has not yet

implemented four UN Security Council resolutions on withdrawal of its armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts.

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