



ARMENIA

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

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UNGA62/ THIRD COMMITTEE

Agenda item 71: Right of peoples to self-determination

Statement by H.E. Mr. Armen Martirosyan, Permanent Representative

Mr. Chairman,

The Armenian delegation always uses this annual opportunity to take the floor of the Third Committee to elaborate on a hotly debated item on the General Assembly agenda, that is at the same time, considered a sacred right – the right of peoples to self-determination.

Immediately after World War II, the UN Charter - a document placed at the foundation of our organization, identified the main principles for a just international order, and among them is self-determination.

This unambiguous stance of the international community on the equality of the principles of self-determination, territorial integrity and others was once more confirmed even during the Cold War when the Helsinki Final Act was adopted in 1975.

Mr. Chairman,

People exercise their right to self-determination at various levels. The ultimate manifestation of a peoples' right to self-determination is the right to declare – or, reject – secession and full independence. Every member in this comes from a country that has exercised that right at some time in its history.

In the modern era, it appears there are two kinds of self-determination movements. There are those who opt for this right and are allowed to work through the entire process of self-determination in a civilized, tolerant environment, where at the end of the process a majority either chooses or dismisses the option of going it alone. Examples of this exist throughout Europe and in North America – from Scotland and Belgium to Quebec. In other words, there is a conscious acknowledgement that the human rights of the collective must be respected just as the human rights of any individual citizen must be. And they are.

Then, there are examples of other self-determination struggles that become something else because there is no respect for the human rights of the group involved. Indeed, it can even be said that in our part of the world, the international community is extremely solicitous of the rights of each individual citizen, making certain that our new societies recognize and respect these rights. But sometimes, out of fear of a greater conflict, a conflict of a different nature, the rights of the group are pushed under the carpet, with the hope that perhaps they might just go away and that territorial and sovereignty issues will not arise.

The very notion of sovereignty has historically emerged from the responsibility of states towards own citizens. Therefore, governments that discriminate against and persecute certain groups of their population cannot claim the right to govern those people. It is naïve to believe that the people, who defend their very lives against an abusive government, will somehow be convinced to consent to remain under the rule of that same government that considers democracy, protection of human rights and rule of law a favour rather than duty and genuine commitment.

Mr. Chairman,

Armenia strongly believes that the free expression of the peoples' will is the most effective and democratic means to provide that people an opportunity to make their own choice and to decide on their future. Further, life in the Balkans and in the Caucasus and elsewhere has proven that any other kind of solution offers neither stability nor security for anyone in the neighborhood.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.