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OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair's activity should continue – Russian Deputy FM

The activities of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs should be continued, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko said in an interview with *TASS*.

"They made an important contribution to the development of basic principles for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, many of which were reflected in the statement of November 9, 2020. This also applies to the return to Azerbaijan of the regions located around Nagorno-Karabakh, the return of refugees, the preservation of the corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, security, peacekeeping operations, unblocking all economic and transport links in the region," he said.

"The task of achieving a comprehensive political settlement, which, in accordance with the decisions of the OSCE Budapest summit (1994), is entrusted to the Minsk Group co-chairs, remains in demand. The "Troika" has strong international support and can be useful in developing mutually acceptable approaches to further steps, including on the issue of status, but carefully and slowly, when the time comes," the Deputy FM said.

According to him, now the OSCE Minsk Group and its co-chairs could be active in strengthening confidence-building measures between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

"The development of dialogue within the framework of civil society will contribute to the general improvement of the situation in the region and the creation of prerequisites for further steps on the political track," Rudenko said.

No reason for Turkey to keep Armenia border closed – FM

There is no reason for Turkey to keep the Armenian border closed, Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian said at a Q&A session at the National Assembly.

He reminded that the blockade was imposed because of the status quo in Artsakh, which has now changed through use of force.

As for the joint Azerbaijani-Turkish drills in Kars, he said any military exercise a cause of concern. "On one side we see such manifestations, on the other hand we see different messages coming from Turkey. While it's accepted practice in diplomacy to speak through messages, I think it's to proceed from messages to actions," the Foreign Minister said.

According to him, the new post-war situation poses new challenges, but also opens up new opportunities.

"As a state, as a government and as a society we should strive to deescalate the situation, which will, in turn, contribute to the strengthening of the security environment," he noted.

Minister Aivazian stressed that the strengthening of the security environment in Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh the priority for us has been and remains a priority.

Armenian PM congratulates China's President, Premier of State Council on Spring Festival

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan sent congratulatory letters to China's President Xi Jinping and Premier of the State Council Li Keqiang on the Chinese New Year – the Spring Festival.

The letter addressed to the Chinese President reads:

"Your Excellency,

On behalf of the Armenian people and myself personally I address my warm congratulations and wishes to you and the good people of China on the occasion of the Chinese New Year – the Spring Festival. I wish that the Spring Festival brings peace and welfare to all families.

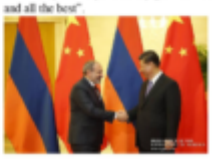
Armenia attaches great importance to the consistent development and strengthening of the traditional friendly relations with China.

Your Excellency, please accept my best wishes of good health and success".

The Armenian PM's letter addressed to the Premier of the State Council of China reads:

"Your Excellency,

On behalf of the Armenian government, I address my warm congratulations and wishes to you and the State Council of China on the Chinese New Year – the Spring Festival. Let the Spring Festival bring peace, welfare and fulfillment of the set goals.

Armenia highlights the consistent development of the traditional friendly relations and practical cooperation with China.

I wish you and your family good health and all the best".