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THE UNACCEPTABLE STATUS QUO IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH AND LITHUANIA

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Armenian press agencies have reported that a self assumed foreign minister of a so called Government of Nagorno-Karabakh, an illegitimate international entity, has been invited as special guest to a conference held in the Lithuanian Parliament on 26 February on relations with Armenia where he has delivered a speech. Again according to the Armenian press, a member of the Lithuanian Assembly, Seimas, has proposed to establish a friendship group with this illegitimate entity and a declaration has been signed to that effect.

It is understandable and not surprising that memories of the Soviet regime and ties to it still exist in Lithuania. However, the point that must be kept in mind and paid attention to is the fact that Lithuania is now a fully responsible member of the European Union and its foreign policy steps also have reflections within the context of EU common foreign policy. It would be incumbent upon the Minks Group and its Co-chairs, who emphasize that the status quo of Nagorno-Karabakh is unacceptable and a comprehensive, peaceful solution must be reached, to counter such an initiative both on part of Lithuania and the EU common foreign policy. In fact, within the framework of the Eastern Partnership and Neighborhood Policy developed by the EU, Lithuania has aspired to organizing an Eastern Partnership Summit in November this year at its capital, Vilnius. Azerbaijan and Armenia are also among the six countries of the former Soviet geography which this initiative covers.

Hence, the message reflected from the conference organized in the Lithuanian Parliament provides fodder that goes beyond bilateral relations. As it would be recalled, in its new eastern expansion covering six countries of the former Soviet geography, the EU has declared its decision of principle to apply differentiated treatment on a country by country basis. Various statements of high level EU officials in favor of Armenia are also on record. Now a new step has been taken against Azerbaijan. While negative attitude against Azerbaijan is not reflected in official statements so as to give the appearance of nondiscrimination, in practice no harm is seen in striking a vital raw nerve which predictably could lead to Azerbaijans reaction.

It could also be seen as yet another sign that the vision of transforming the EU into a discriminating and isolating fortress rather than to an inclusive union and contemplating border to the northeast, which has started to be delineated with the Schengen barbed

wire along the Maritsa river, is still rampant.

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