

Minister
of Foreign Affairs



Ministre
des Affaires étrangères

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0G2

June 14, 2023

Mr. Ali Ehsassi
Chair
House of Commons Standing Committee
on Foreign Affairs and International Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Ehsassi:

I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Government of Canada to the Eleventh Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development entitled, “*Reopening of the Lachin Corridor*” on February 14, 2023.

The Government of Canada has been closely following developments related to the ongoing protests and blockage in the Lachin Corridor, which has impeded travel between Nagorno-Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia since December 12, 2022. Canada has repeatedly urged Azerbaijani authorities to ensure the Lachin Corridor is opened, that freedom of movement is maintained, and to prevent further negative impacts on the humanitarian situation. Canada has further underlined that Azerbaijan’s obligations under the November 9, 2020 Ceasefire Agreement must be upheld. Canada has also called on all parties involved in the 2020 Ceasefire Agreement – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia – to fulfill their obligations.

Canada has voiced its concerns in public statements, notably in social media messages of December 14, 2022; in our multilateral interventions, notably at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; and in our bilateral meetings. Canada has engaged with the Governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as with likeminded partners, through our embassies and Global Affairs officials. Canada has reiterated the message that it is critical that activities undermining confidence in the peace process cease to allow Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue working toward a peaceful comprehensive resolution to the conflict.

Over the years, Canada has consistently reiterated its support for a comprehensive, negotiated political solution to the question of Nagorno-Karabakh’s status. We support the continuation of dialogue between the parties in order to promote confidence-building measures. We commend the efforts to promote dialogue between both sides and welcome the European Union’s important work to facilitate dialogue in recent months. These are important steps towards normalization of relations and ensuring greater regional stability, and we encourage such dialogue to continue. Through both bilateral and multilateral channels, Canada continues to advocate for adherence to the 2020 Ceasefire Agreement, including the return of all prisoners of war, as a key step in the confidence-building process.

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We have also welcomed the European Union's decision to establish a longer term civilian European Union Mission in Armenia and hope it contributes to stability in the border areas, helps build confidence on the ground, and contributes to an environment conducive to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Canada stands ready to continue supporting measures to stabilize the current situation, as well as negotiations for a comprehensive peace treaty.

Canada has encouraged Armenia's current democratic and reform transition process. In 2021 and 2022, Special Envoy for the Prime Minister to the European Union and Europe, Stéphane Dion, conducted a mission to explore options for Canada to better support Armenian democracy. His report published in April 2022 included 11 recommendations, including continuing to support Armenia's Parliament and its civil society. Canada has since committed to opening an embassy in Yerevan, which is now set to open in later 2023.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for the diligence and commitment undertaken in your work.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs