

# Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict went down in history as one of the most tragic conflicts of the 21st century, with its consequences seriously affecting the fate of millions of people.

Having started with open territorial claims against Azerbaijan and provocations on ethnic grounds in 1988, the conflict resulted in Armenia's military aggression against Azerbaijan.

The Armenians, who occupied high positions in the Soviet Union, the leadership of Armenian SSR and the Armenian diaspora abroad embarked on a purposeful campaign to seize the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), which was established within Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic in 1923, and annex it to Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic taking the opportunity created by the weakening of the central government of the USSR in the early 1980s.

The groundless territorial claims against Azerbaijan laid by Armenian chauvinist Z. Balayan in his book "Ojag" (Hearth) published in Armenian in Yerevan in 1981 and in Russian in Moscow in 1984, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev's Adviser Abel Aganbekyan's supporting the annexation of the NKAO to Armenia in his interview with L'Humanité newspaper in Paris in 1987, mass rallies in Yerevan in Autumn 1987 where the Armenian nationalists called for violence against Azerbaijanis and raised territorial claims were integral components of this campaign.

The forced expulsion of Azerbaijanis from their historical lands began in Gafan region of the Armenian SSR in the late 1987. In 1988-1989, Azerbaijanis living in other regions of Armenia (Amasya, Ararat, Ijevan, Yeghegnadzor, Meghri, Sisyan, Gorus, Gukark, Vardenis, Masis, Azizbeyov, Artashat, Hoktemberyan, Noyemberyan and others) and cities (Yerevan, Kirovakan, Stepanavan, Spitak, Jermuk, Gyumri, etc.) suffered the same fate. More than 250,000 Azerbaijanis were expelled from their historical lands, 216 of them were brutally murdered, and 1,154 people were wounded. They found shelter in Azerbaijan saving their lives from the Armenian violence.

Until 1988, Armenia had been densely populated by the Azerbaijanis. But unlike the Armenians living in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the areas densely populated by Azerbaijanis were not given an autonomous status by the Soviet leadership within the Armenian SSR.

Azerbaijanis were purposefully expelled from the territories of present day Armenia in 1905-1906, 1918-1920, 1948-1953. In 1948-1953 alone, more than 150,000 Azerbaijanis were forcefully and brutally removed from their historical lands in the territory of the Armenian SSR. Thousands of people, including the elderly and infants died of unbearable conditions during deportation process, severe climate change, physical violence, and moral suffering.



The Armenians staged the first rally relating to Karabakh in NKAO's central town of Khankandi (the then Stepanakert) on February 13, 1988. A number of rallies were organized in NKAO from February 16 to March 2. Armenian members of NKAO Soviet of People's Deputies voted (Azerbaijanis and deputies of other nationalities did not participate in the voting) for annexation of NKAO to Armenian SSR. On February 21, 1988, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted a resolution "On the Events in Nagorno-Karabakh", describing the events as "a campaign provoked by nationalist elements". However, on February 22, 1988, near the town of Asgaran on the Khankandi-Aghdam highway, the Armenians opened fire on a peaceful demonstration by the Azerbaijanis protesting against the decision of the Soviet of People's Deputies of NKAO. Two Azerbaijani young people were killed in this incident. In early March, two organizations were established with the aim of annexing Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. One of them, named "Karabakh" operated in Yerevan, while another one "Krunk" in Khankandi.

On June 14, 1988, the Supreme Soviet of Armenian SSR adopted a resolution on "inclusion" of NKAO in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. In response, on June 17, 1988, the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan SSR reaffirmed NKAO's status within Azerbaijan SSR. On July 18, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of USSR adopted a resolution on the impossibility of changing the national and territorial division of Azerbaijan SSR and Armenian SSR. By doing so, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR supported the principle of territorial integrity of the republics, guided by the relevant provision of the USSR Constitution (Article 78).

The gradual weakening of the USSR state structure was further exacerbating the situation. Armed groups appeared in Nagorno-Karabakh. Mostly sent from Armenia, these groups were engaged in destructive activities. Under these circumstances, Special Administration Committee (existed from January 12 to November 28, 1989) created by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet was doomed to failure.

The Armenian diaspora was both influencing the dynamics of the conflict and carrying out propaganda in the countries where they were operating and trying to incline them to a resolution of the conflict based on their own interests. It is no coincidence that on July 19, 1989, the US Senate passed a resolution on the US assistance in finding a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with aspirations of the Soviet Armenian people. On November 19, 1989, the US Senate expressed its wish "to assist the fair resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the course of bilateral talks with the Soviet Union, which would reflect the aspirations of the people of the Oblast". A newly-established "human rights movement", particularly "Memorial" organization, unilaterally defended Armenia's territorial claims.

On December 1, 1989, the Supreme Soviet of Armenian SSR adopted an unprecedented decision "On the unification of Armenian SSR and Nagorno-Karabakh". On January 9, 1990, the Supreme Soviet of Armenia included the plan on the social and economic development of NKAO in Armenian SSR's plan for 1990. On May 20, 1990, deputies of the Supreme Soviet of Armenian SSR from NKAO were elected.

The decisions of the Supreme Soviet of Armenian SSR revealed the aggressive essence of the conflict. Territorial claims against Azerbaijan were raised not only by the nationalist groups, but also by the Armenian government authorities. Armenia wanted to annex part of Azerbaijan's territory at any cost.



In May 1990, the Armenian All National Movement won the parliamentary elections in Armenia. In fact, the radical nationalists and chauvinists advocating the war came to power in Armenia. This speeded up their unleashing an aggressive war. Yerevan concentrated all its efforts on establishing and arming informal military units. During the collapse of the USSR, when Azerbaijan just began to build its army, Armenia already had well-trained armed units. Armenia had a military superiority from the beginning of the conflict and always preferred a forceful resolution of the conflict in line with their military goals. Therefore, Armenia never took a serious position on the negotiation process and used it to deceive the international community.

Both during the war and in the following period, Azerbaijan's position was fully justified in terms of the Constitution of the USSR and the norms of international law. But incompetence of the then Azerbaijani political elite and the absence of a political leader made the situation even more dramatic. At that time prominent and far-sighted statesman Heydar Aliyev who analyzed the course of events and understood that the government should take a tough, principled approach to the issues, was forced into isolation. His absence in the republic directly contributed to the deepening of the conflict in line with the Armenians' aspirations.

The deployment of the Soviet troops in Baku and the mass killing of civilian population on January 20, 1990, completely discredited the Kremlin and personally Mikhail Gorbachev. After the bloody events in Baku, the Soviet troops shot down civilians in the regions of Neftchala and Lankaran. A total of 150 people were killed in those bloody January events. The massacre of the 20th January played a crucial role in reshaping the Azerbaijani people's attitude towards the USSR and in fulfilling their national independence ideas. While the communist leaders of Azerbaijan did not see radical changes in the nation's consciousness, Heydar Aliyev made a statement in Moscow on January 21 and sharply protested the Soviet leadership's biased policy against the Azerbaijani people.

The Republican Organizing Committee for NKAO, which was created under the resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, was doomed to failure since the very beginning because it was based on the weakening possibilities of the Soviet system. Its activities became definitely idle in the aftermath of the August events of 1991 which completely destroyed the Soviet statehood. The new political reality showed that the USSR government was nominal and that its end was approaching.

On September 2, 1991, the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" (NKR) was declared within the borders of NKAO and Shaumyan region of Azerbaijan SSR. On December 10, 1991, a "referendum" was held in "NKR". Taking into account the prospect of the collapse of the USSR, Armenia shifted its strategy to avoid describing itself as one of the sides involved in the conflict. On November 23, 1991, in order to respond to this events, the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Azerbaijan made a decision to abolish the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia, which had long been openly laying territorial claims, launched military operations against Azerbaijan without announcement of war. Consequently, the conflict entered a new "hot phase".

During the military campaign, the Armenian armed forces ferociously murdered the peaceful Azerbaijani population in the regions and cities that they occupied, including civilians and servicemen. The Azerbaijanis were subjected to both ethnic cleansing and a real genocide.



The Armenian armed forces targeted the civilian population purposefully in violation of all the principles and norms of international humanitarian law. The military and political leadership of Armenia, who were systematically conducting massacre and genocide of civilians in Meshali village in Asgaran, Malibayli and Gushchular villages in Shusha, Garadaghli village in Khojavand, Khojali town, Aghdaban village in Kalbajar and other places, intended to physically and biologically exterminate the indigenous Azerbaijani population of the Nagorno-Karabakh and to break the spirit of resistance of the remaining part of population.

Armenia's military aggression as well as the threat of civil war emerging in Azerbaijan, the chaos and economic crisis, and the paralysis of state institutions put the country in the face of the actual dilemma "to exist, or not to exist". At such a crucial point, the Azerbaijani people found their salvation in their great son, experienced statesman Heydar Aliyev, and entrusted the country's fate to him.

When Heydar Aliyev returned to political power on June 15, 1993, the country was in a very difficult situation. He made a conclusion that the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict requires a comprehensive approach and consideration of internal and external factors. This entailed ensuring social and political stability, establishing a regular army with combat capability, restructuring state institutions and ensuring their effective functioning, rehabilitating the economy and conducting radical governance reforms, signing strategic oil contracts that will ensure the development of the country for decades to come, and uniting Azerbaijanis around a single idea of Azerbaijanism.

On May 12, 1994, the agreement on ceasefire was signed. Until then, as a result of Armenia's military aggression 20 percent of the Azerbaijani territory – Khankandi town, Khojaly, Shusha, Lachin, Khojavand, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli, Zangilan regions, as well as 13 villages in Tartar, 7 villages in Gazakh and 1 village in Sadarak region in Nakhchivan – had been occupied by the Armenian armed forces.

During the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, more than one million Azerbaijanis became IDPs, while 20,000 people were killed in military operations and 50,000 were wounded and became disabled.

As an outcome of the conflict, 4,000 Azerbaijanis went missing, including 67 children, 265 women and 326 elderly people. Fate of those people still remains unknown. More than 2,000 Azerbaijanis were captured and taken hostages by the Armenians.

From 1988 to 1993, 900 settlements, 150 residential buildings, 7,000 public buildings, 693 schools, 855 kindergartens, 695 health-care facilities, 927 libraries, 44 temples, 9 mosques, 473 historical monuments, palaces and museums, 40,000 museum exhibits, 6,000 industrial and agricultural facilities, 160 bridges and other infrastructure facilities were destroyed in Karabakh.

The conflict, which grew into a serious threat to international peace and security, has led to serious debates within international organizations and a number of important documents have been adopted.



The UN Security Council, which acts as the main guarantor of international peace and security, adopted four resolutions – 822, 853, 874 and 884 – regarding the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. These resolutions laid a legal framework for the political process to resolve the conflict based on the norms and principles of international law. All these resolutions condemn the occupation of the Azerbaijani lands and emphasize the inadmissibility of implementation of territorial claims through the use of force, reaffirm the territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of Azerbaijan's borders and demand immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Military operations to occupy Azerbaijani territories are considered as aggression by law. The facts that the Armenian armed forces fought against the Azerbaijani army, were directly involved in the occupation of the Azerbaijani lands and were deployed in those territories, as well as establishment of the self-styled "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" prove that Armenia is one of the sides of the conflict. In its resolution on the case of "Chiragov and Others v. Armenia" issued on June 16, 2015, the European Court of Human Rights stressed that Armenia has an "effective control" in the occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions. While heads of CIS member states signed the Memorandum on maintaining peace and stability in the CIS region in 1995, Armenia refused to endorse the 7th and 8th articles of the document which stipulate the following: "The participating states will undertake in their own territories measures to prevent any patterns of separatism, nationalism, chauvinism and fascism," and they also "commit themselves neither to support any separatist movements or separatist regimes in the territories of other participating states nor to give them economic, financial, military and other assistance". These and many other facts once again prove that Azerbaijan has been subjected to a military aggression and it is impossible to deny it. A crime of aggression is a specific type of crime where a person or state plans, initiates, or executes an act of aggression using state military force that violates the Charter of the United Nations. It requires serious response and appropriate measures. The UN Security Council resolutions must be implemented and injustice against the Azerbaijani people must be stopped. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly stated that "the international community has not yet paid due attention to the occupation of the territories of the internationally recognized sovereign state ... This is the biggest injustice and this injustice continues for many years."

The UN General Assembly's Resolution on "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" adopted on September 7, 2006, condemned the fires set by the Armenians in the occupied territories. Another resolution of the same name adopted by the UN General Assembly on March 14, 2008, covered legal, political and humanitarian aspects of the conflict and reaffirmed the principles of its settlement. These principles emphasize respect for Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian army from Azerbaijan's occupied lands, the right of IDPs to return to their homelands, provision of conditions for coexistence of the two communities in an area with autonomous governance system within Azerbaijan, and illegality of the situation which emerged as a result of the occupation.

The conflict has repeatedly been discussed within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Guided by the principles and norms of international law, the organization recognized the fact of military aggression against Azerbaijan. The 21st Session of OIC foreign ministers held in Karachi, Pakistan, back in 1993, adopted a resolution condemning the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan, demanding the immediate withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied lands, and urging respect for Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and peaceful, fair resolution of the conflict based on the principle of inviolability of borders. In other resolutions, the organization urged the UN Security Council to play an active role in finding a political, solution to the dispute, ensure the implementation of the four resolutions and recognize the fact of invasion against the Republic of Azerbaijan.

At its Summit in Istanbul in 2016, OIC established the Contact Group on the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Contact Group includes seven countries: Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Morocco, Djibouti, and Gambia.



In 1993, the European Union urged the execution of the resolutions of the UN Security Council, withdrawal of the Armenian army from the occupied Azerbaijani lands, respect for territorial integrity and internationally-recognized borders of the sides, and an end to the internationally illegitimate and forced situation. The fact that the organization built relations with its partners on the basis of these principles proves that it is impossible to regulate international relations without respect for fundamental legal principles. It is evidenced by documents and statements adopted under the Eastern Partnership initiative. The Joint Declaration signed at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels on November 24, 2017, reaffirmed the European Union's determination to support territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of all its partners.

Although the activities of the Council of Europe mainly cover political and legislative reforms, it periodically expresses its views on the ongoing conflicts in Europe, including in the South Caucasus. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) initially issued various reports on appalling living conditions of refugees and IDPs, urging their unconditional return and calling on member states to take a delicate approach to this humanitarian tragedy. PACE stood for political settlement of the conflict via mediation and based on the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and Paris Charter. PACE resolution No 1119 on "Conflicts in Transcaucasia", which was adopted on April 22, 1997, stresses that political settlement must be negotiated by all parties involved, drawing in particular on the following principles: inviolability of borders, guaranteed security for all peoples concerned, particularly through multinational peacekeeping forces; extensive autonomy status for Nagorno-Karabakh to be negotiated by all the parties concerned; right of return of refugees and displaced persons and their reintegration respecting human rights. PACE believes that granting autonomy to ethnic groups in order to let them express themselves will contribute to conflict resolution. Ethnic groups should take full advantage of their rights and should not undermine the territorial integrity of state. Resolution "The conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference" adopted by PACE on January 25, 2005, condemned the occupation of the Azerbaijani lands, expressed concern over the ethnic cleansing in these territories, urged the execution of the UN Security Council resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 and withdrawal of the military from the occupied lands. The organization also reaffirmed IDPs' right to return to their homelands, and emphasized the inadmissibility of occupation by one member state of the territory of another. On January 26, 2016, Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution "Inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan are deliberately deprived of water", urging the immediate withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the region concerned, calling deliberate creation of an artificial environmental crisis as "environmental aggression", and once again recognizing the occupation of part of the Azerbaijani territories by Armenia.

Documents adopted within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), principles and norms of international law constitute a legal framework and mechanism of the negotiations based on the resolutions of the UN Security Council. After Azerbaijan and Armenia became members of CSCE at the meeting of its Council of Ministers held in Prague on January 30-31, 1992, the organization started to show a greater interest in the conflict. Following a visit by rapporteurs to Armenia and Azerbaijan in February, the CSCE Committee of Senior Officials adopted a decision, calling the parties to peace and to reach a ceasefire, and urging cessation of territorial claims to neighboring states. On March 24, 1992, Committee of Senior Officials convened the Additional Meeting of the CSCE Council in Helsinki where CSCE was called on to play the leading role in the conflict resolution. The Council decided to convene a special conference in Minsk that would act as a permanent framework for negotiations.

An agreement was reached at the organization's 1994 Budapest summit to dispatch a multinational force to the conflict zone to strengthen the efforts and protect peace as part of the coordinated action to stimulate conflict resolution process, and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office was instructed to appoint the co-chairs of the Minsk Conference.



Despite Armenia's attempts to interfere, the OSCE Lisbon Summit held on December 2-3, 1996, discussed the principles of conflict resolution. And the statement by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, which was added to the final document, featured these principles. The principles, which all the OSCE member states joined, are as follows:

1. Territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Republic of Armenia;
2. Legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh defined by an agreement on self-determination which gives Nagorno-Karabakh the highest degree of self-governance within Azerbaijan;
3. Guaranteed security for Nagorno-Karabakh and its entire population, including mutual commitment to ensure compliance by all the parties with the provisions of the settlement.

Stipulation of the aforementioned principles at the Lisbon Summit, establishment of a new co-chairmanship institution within the Minsk Group in early 1997, and the appointment of Russia, US and France as co-chairs gave an impetus to the negotiation process. The co-chairs gave written proposals on the settlement of the conflict. In summer of 1997, a draft comprehensive agreement on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was presented to the parties. Despite Azerbaijan's constructive stance, Armenia rejected the proposal. In autumn of 1997, during the co-chairs' visit to the region, the parties were presented a "stage-by-stage" plan of settlement of the conflict. The plan prioritized the following stages of conflict resolution: settlement of technical issues, withdrawal of the Armenian troops from the occupied territories, return of internally displaced persons to their lands, restoration of communication means, deployment of the OSCE peacekeeping mission, review of the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh.

However, Armenia again refused to make constructive progress in the negotiation process. In November 1998, the co-chairs' new proposal based on the concept of a "common state" granting Nagorno-Karabakh the status of a state and territorial entity within Azerbaijan contradicted the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. So, Azerbaijan rejected this proposal.

In the following meetings and negotiations, Armenia's refusal to comply with the norms and principles of international law as well as the existing resolutions hampered the achievement of progress in the course of negotiations.

In November 2007, the Minsk Group developed the principles of a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The first version of the Madrid document, which included proposals within the Madrid process, was submitted to the parties. At the end of 2009, an updated draft of the Madrid document was developed and submitted to the parties. But Armenia's destructive position again prevented the achievement of the expected progress. Both documents provided for a stage-by-stage settlement of the conflict and featured the following key elements of conflict resolution: withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, return of internally displaced persons to their native lands, restoration of the conflict-affected areas, including the communication lines, granting a temporary status to the Azerbaijani community who returned to Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region and the Armenian community in Nagorno-Karabakh.

On November 2, 2008, after the meeting between the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan in Moscow, the Russian, Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents signed the Moscow Declaration. The Declaration pointed to the settlement of the conflict by political means based on the norms and principles of international law and on the basis of the documents and decisions adopted within this framework, which will in turn pave the way for a comprehensive cooperation in the region. This part of the Declaration envisages the settlement of the conflict on the basis of the UN Security Council resolutions and provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. This once again confirms the inevitability of solving the conflict within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.



At subsequent meetings, the presidents agreed to continue talks towards peaceful settlement of the conflict and paid special attention to humanitarian aspects of the problem. However, as negotiation process intensified and went beyond Armenia's interests, Yerevan attempted to undermine the negotiations through military provocations. Thus, instead of discussing specific issues on the negotiation table after the Paris meeting of the presidents initiated by France on October 27, 2014, Armenia held a large-scale military training in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan involving more than 40,000 personnel.

Offensive flights of the Armenian armed forces over the positions of the Azerbaijani army on the line of contact resulted in the shooting down of an Armenian helicopter. This incident brought about another break in the negotiation process, with the meeting between the presidents of the two countries resumed on December 19, 2015, in Bern, Switzerland.

In the early 2016, when specific plans for the settlement of the conflict were discussed, Armenia once again resorted to a military provocation and shelled densely populated areas, including schools, hospitals and worship sites along the line of contact on April 2. The Armenian attacks killed six Azerbaijani civilians, including children, while 33 people were seriously injured. The Azerbaijani armed forces launched a successful counter-offensive to retaliate the enemy's provocations, and liberated strategically important positions. If on the one hand, the April events showed the strength of the Azerbaijani army, on the other, they once again demonstrated to the international community that the maintenance of the status quo and the presence of the Armenian troops in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan are the key causes of tension in the conflict zone and remain a major obstacle to the political settlement of the problem.

Throughout 2016, substantial discussions were held between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Vienna and St. Petersburg. But because of Armenia's non-constructive position these meetings marked no progress in the settlement of the conflict.

Armenia continued its political and military provocations in 2017 too. First, an illegal "referendum" was held in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan on February 20. However, the international community rejected this referendum and reaffirmed its support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. In June and July, Armenia tried to escalate the situation along the line of contact against a backdrop of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs' increasing efforts to resolve the conflict and the international community's serious calls for substantive negotiations. The Armenian military units continued their aggressive actions and intensively shelled the Azerbaijani armed forces' frontline positions, and the civilian population from heavy artillery. This resulted in the killing on July 4 of civilians of Alkhanli village of Fuzuli region, Sahiba Allahverdiyeva, born in 1966, and her granddaughter Zahra Guliyeva, born in 2016. Another civilian Salminaz Guliyeva, born in 1965, was seriously wounded. The international community sharply condemned Armenia's deliberately targeting civilians and facilities. The international community once again became convinced that Armenia is not interested in the political settlement of the conflict.

Despite all the peaceful efforts of Azerbaijan, Armenia with its destructive policy hampers the step-by-step resolution of the problem by all means, tries to undermine the negotiation process through political and military provocations, and aims to achieve the war goals by perpetuating the current status quo based on the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories.

The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be resolved within the international borders and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev said: "Our greatest compromise is our commitment to peace negotiations. But we need to create new conditions by using these opportunities. I want to reiterate that the strengthening of military potential does not automatically lead to the resumption of war. This is the final option. We must be ready for this. Each country, including the one in a state of war, and whose territory was occupied must be prepared for this."



The obligations undertaken by each entity of international law begin with respect for the principles of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders. Today, the world community unambiguously recognizes and supports Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev openly stated that "the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is not and will never be the subject of negotiations... Azerbaijan will not take a step back from this position. That is, there will be no concessions concerning the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. "

Based on the norms and principles of international law, the UN Security Council resolutions and principles of the Helsinki Final Act, the political and legal foundations of the step-by-step settlement of the conflict were established and adopted by the international community. This envisages the withdrawal of the Armenian troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the ensuring of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan within its international borders, the return of the Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons, including the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh to their native lands and the autonomous co-existence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh within the borders of Azerbaijan. This approach is a key framework for normalizing relations and ensuring peace between the sides.

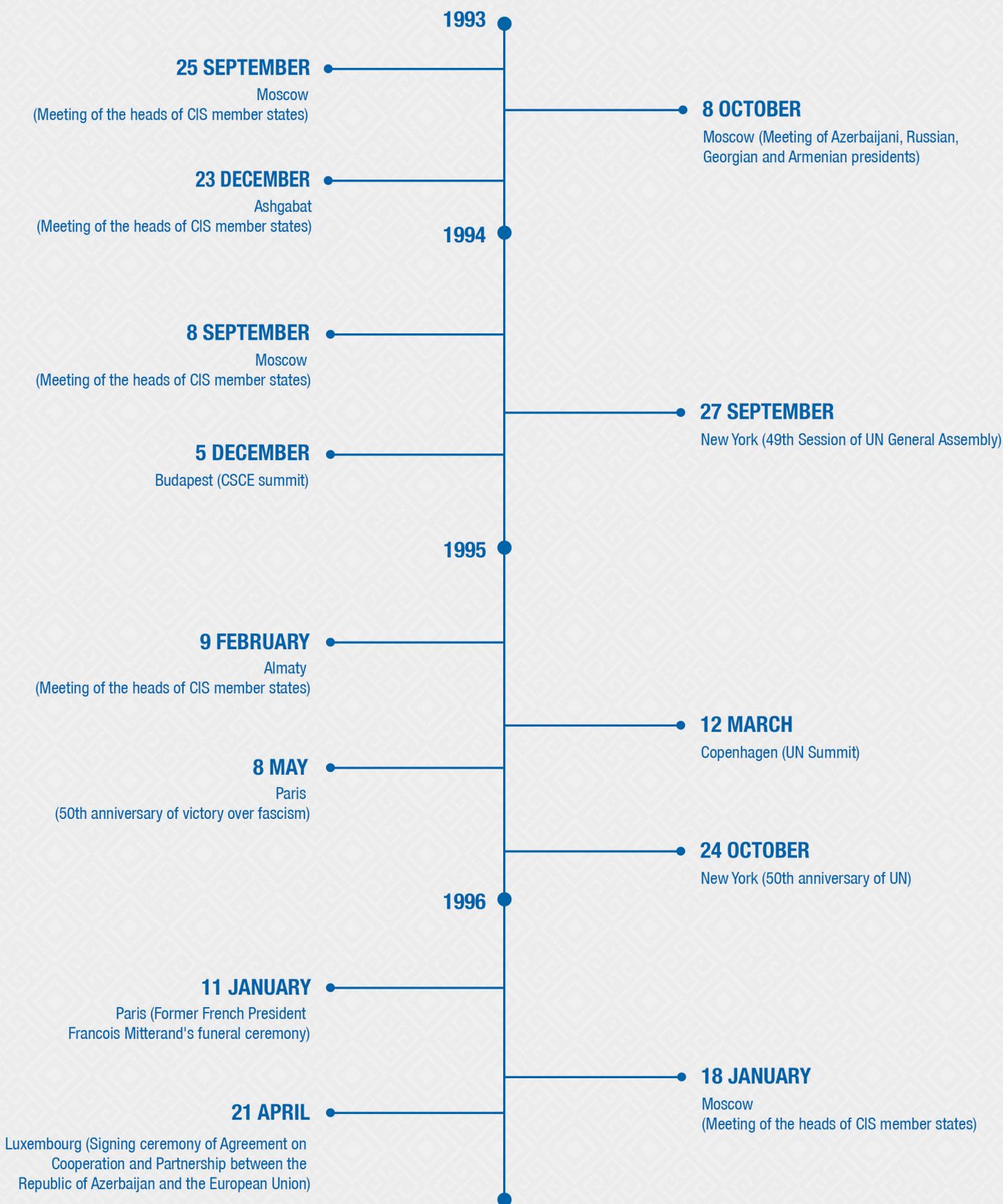
## APPENDIX: №1

[Documents of regional and international organizations regarding Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict](#)



# APPENDIX: №2

CHRONOLOGY of meetings over settlement of Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict held between Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents



1996

**3 JUNE**  
Kislovodsk (Meeting  
of Azerbaijani, Russian, Georgian and Armenian  
presidents over regional conflicts and problems)

**2 DEKABR**  
Lisbon (OSCE Summit)

**12 MAY**  
Mashhad (Opening ceremony of  
Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railway)

**25 OCTOBER**  
Moscow (Meeting of Heads of State and  
Government of the Organisation of the Black Sea  
Economic Cooperation member states)

1997

**28 APRIL**  
Istanbul (The Organisation of the Black Sea Economic  
Cooperation-business conference)

**22 OCTOBER**  
Chisinau  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

**28 MARCH**  
Moscow  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

**10 OCTOBER**  
Strasbourg (Council of Europe Summit)

1998

**28 APRIL**  
Moscow  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

1999

**1 APRIL**  
Moscow  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

**16 JULY**  
Geneva (working visit)

**10 SEPTEMBER**  
Yalta (International conference "Baltic-  
Black Sea cooperation: towards an integrated Europe  
of the 21st century without dividing lines")

**18 NOVEMBER**  
Istanbul (OSCE Summit)

**26 APRIL**  
Washington  
(Summit on the 50th anniversary of NATO)

**22 AUGUST**  
Geneva (working visit)

**11 OCTOBER**  
Sadarak region  
(Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic)

2000

**28 JANUARY**  
Davos (World Economic Forum)

**24 JANUARY**  
Moscow  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)



2000

**24 JANUARY**

Moscow  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

**28 JANUARY**

Davos (World Economic Forum)

**20 JUNE**

Moscow  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

**18 AUGUST**

Yalta  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

**7 SEPTEMBER**

New York  
(Millennium Summit of the United Nations)

**30 NOVEMBER**

Minsk  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

2001

**25 JANUARY**

Strasbourg (Ceremony of Azerbaijan's and Armenia's admission to the Council of Europe)

**26 JANUARY**

Paris (mediated by French President)

**4 MARCH**

Paris (mediated by French President)

**3 APRIL**

Key-West (mediated by US)

**31 MAY**

Minsk  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

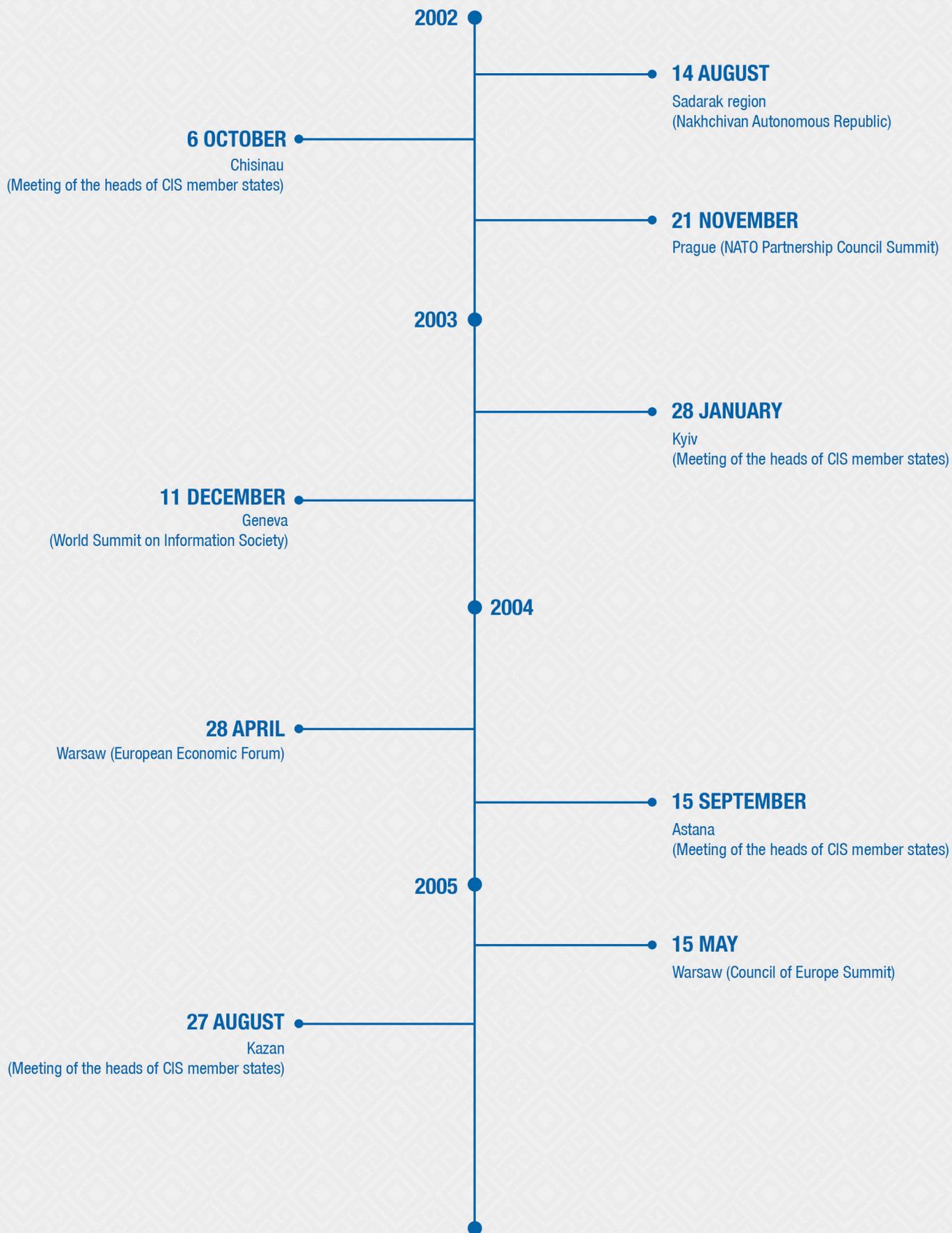
**1 AUGUST**

Sochi  
(Informal meeting of CIS Heads of State)

**30 NOVEMBER**

Moscow  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)





2006

**4 JUNE**  
Bucharest  
(Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue)

**10-11 FEBRUARY**

Rambouillet  
(with participation of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs)

**28 NOVEMBER**

Minsk  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

2007

**9 JUNE**

St. Petersburg  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

2008

**2 NOVEMBER**

Moscow (In Mayn Dorf Castle,  
mediated by President of the Russian Federation)

**6 JUNE**

St. Petersburg  
(Meeting of the heads of CIS member states)

2009

**28 JANUARY**

Zurich (working visit)

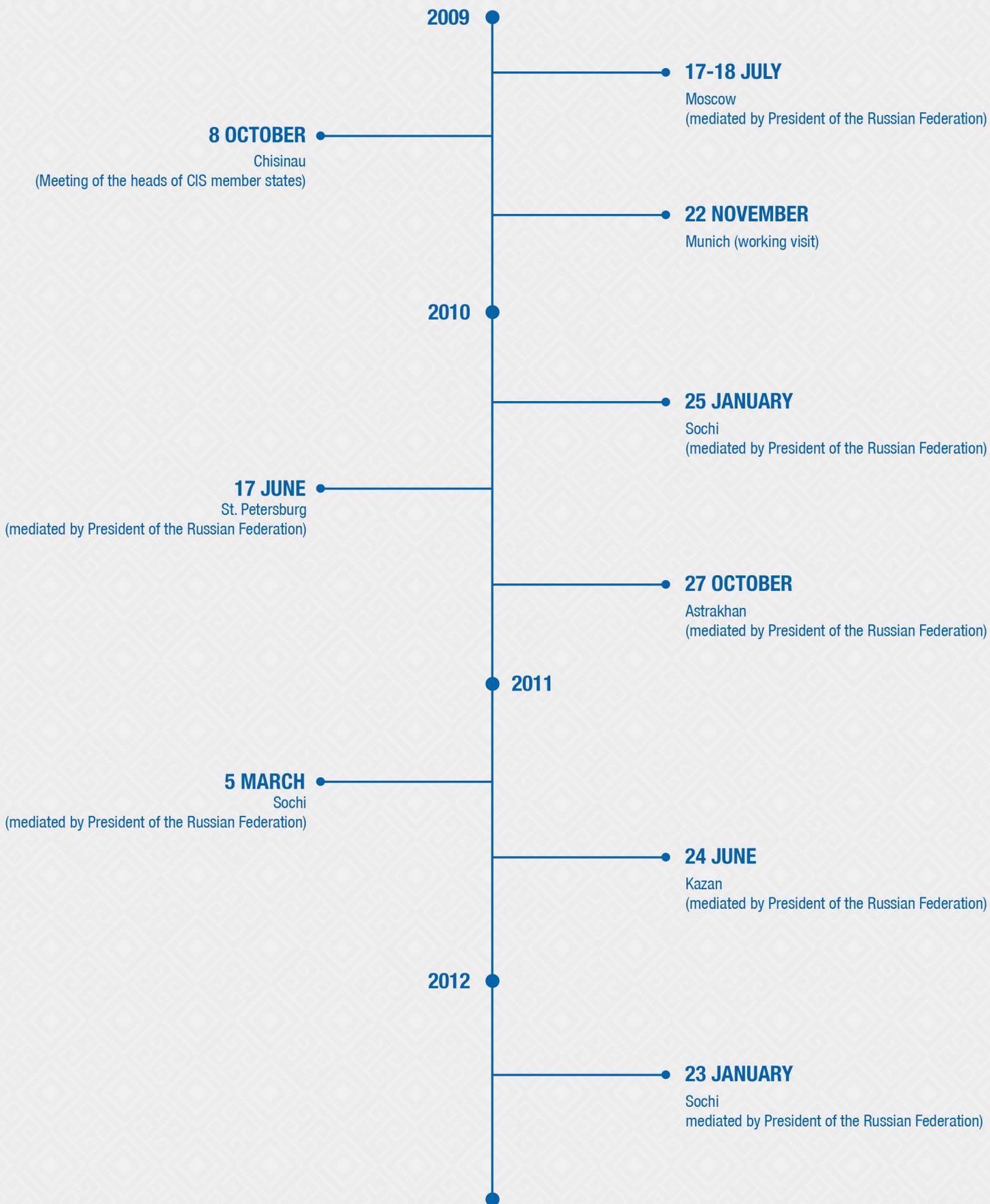
**7 MAY**

Prague  
(Southern Corridor-New Silk Road Summit)

**4 JUNE**

St. Petersburg  
(mediated by President of the Russian Federation)





2013

**19 NOVEMBER**

Vienna (working visit)

2014

**10 AUGUST**

Sochi  
(mediated by President of the Russian Federation)

**4 SEPTEMBER**

Newport (mediated by US Secretary of State)

**27 OCTOBER**

Paris (mediated by French President)

2015

**19 DECEMBER**

Bern  
(on the initiative of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs)

2016

**16 MAY**

Vienna  
(on the initiative of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs)

**20 JUNE**

St. Petersburg  
(mediated by President of the Russian Federation)

2017

**16 OCTOBER**

Geneva  
(on the initiative of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs)

