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**UN Human Rights Council
Forty third Session**

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur
in the field of cultural rights**

Statement

**delivered by Ms. Marziyya Vakilova-Mardaliyeva, First Secretary of the Permanent
Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other International
Organizations in Geneva**

March 4, 2020

Thank you, Madame President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for the presentation of her report.

We welcome the special focus in the report on the cultural rights defenders who seek to preserve vital tangible and intangible heritage in conflict situations.

The destruction and exploitation of cultural heritage in the situations of foreign occupation serve an occupying power's wider policies of appropriating history and removing any signs heralding its origins.

This is vividly exemplified by what is currently happening in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding regions of Azerbaijan. As a result of occupation of these Azerbaijani territories by Armenia, the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan has been destroyed, looted and plundered.

The ongoing policy of deliberate destruction by Armenia has gone far beyond misappropriation and is accompanied with illegal change of the cultural character of the occupied Azerbaijani territories. The recent destructive reconstruction of the 19th-century Mosque in Shusha is another example of Armenia's destructive cultural heritage policy, intending to erode its authenticity and historical value.

The situation around the cultural heritage in the course of armed conflicts is alarming. The international community must have a clearer awareness that destruction of cultural heritage impoverishes all humankind.

I thank you.