



**UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-seventh Session**

**Interactive Dialogue
with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief**

**Statement
delivered by Yalchin Rafiyev, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of
Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva**

March 2, 2017

Mr. President,

The Delegation of Azerbaijan expresses its gratitude to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief for his report and today's presentation.

For many centuries, Muslims, Christians and Jews have been living side by side in harmony in Azerbaijan interacting with one another in a peaceful and respectful manner and establishing a culture of acceptance, trust and confidence. Azerbaijan sees diversity as one of the country's great strengths, and has worked to ensure that this diversity continues to grow and enrich all groups of population. The Government has been providing support to build and restore synagogues, mosques, and churches, and to create new cultural centers for various ethnic and religious groups. Former SR on freedom of religion or belief having visited Azerbaijan characterized it as a country with high level and indisputable tolerance.

However, we are concerned with growing manifestations of religious discrimination and hatred, as well as horrendous attacks around the world that target people on account of their religion or beliefs. In many cases the underlying causes of those horrific manifestations are deeply rooted in complex political, economic and social

environment, which necessitates an integrated and holistic approach based on multi-stakeholder and multifaceted dialogue.

Believing in importance of dialogue as an antidote to the abovementioned worrisome manifestations, Azerbaijan has committed itself to promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogue globally. Over the course of the last decade Azerbaijan has repeatedly and proactively brought together political, cultural, religious leaders from the region and around the world to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

In this context, we would like to kindly ask the SR to elaborate on the role of international events on interreligious dialogue to nurture and promote a culture of tolerance worldwide.

Thank you.