

**Right of reply
by the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**delivered by Mr. Seymur Mardaliyev,
Charge d'Affaires a.i of the
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UNOG in Geneva**

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Mr. Vice-President,

I am exercising the right of reply to the statement made by the Armenian foreign minister this afternoon.

Armenian representatives continue their defective tradition of misleading this Council from the ongoing aggression and occupation of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan.

It is ironic that Armenian FM is preaching about human rights and democratic values as it is exactly due to the Armenia's policy of aggression, occupation and ethnic cleansing Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs suffer from the violation of their fundamental rights for almost 30 years. It is Armenia that advocates for the idea of racial incompatibility between nations and established itself as a mono-ethnic society at the expense of expelling all non-Armenian population, including the indigenous Azerbaijani one. We call on this Council not to turn a blind eye to the ongoing massive violations of human rights on the pretext of democracy, politically motivated arrests of opposition and the emergence of new dictatorship regime in Armenia. Bellicose rhetoric and practices against Azerbaijan is widespread in Armenia. Its recent vivid example is the large-scale military exercises started today in Armenia under the scenario of the declared war against Azerbaijan. So the facts speak themselves.

Armenian attempts to impose that the principle of right to self-determination may be applied in the form of unilateral secession for the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh region is null and void as this principle, according to the Helsinki Final Act cannot breach other norms of the international law such as prohibiting the threat or use of force against sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Azerbaijani and Armenian inhabitants of the region are entitled to the internal right to self-determination within the boundaries of Azerbaijan. Armenia should halt to dream as Azerbaijan will never allow the second Armenian state to be established at the expense of Azerbaijani lands.

As regards the attempts by the Armenian minister to misinterpret events of April 2016, escalation in the conflict zone was the consequence of the direct and deliberate targeting Azerbaijani civilians by Armenian forces living in close vicinity to the line of contact which resulted in killing 6 civilians including one child and wounding 26 people. To defend its citizens Azerbaijani armed forces undertook successful counter measures that resulted in restoring Azerbaijan's sovereignty on certain territories in the occupied regions as well as ensuring the return of Azerbaijani displaced persons to their homes.

Mr. Vice-President,

Presence of the Armenian troops on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is the primary destabilizing factor in the conflict zone. The immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories as demanded in the UN Security Council

resolutions of 1993 is the just solution to bring the lasting peace to our region. Statement by the Armenian foreign minister today as well as the one sounded out most recently by the Prime of Minister of Armenia that he imagines Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan as a part of Armenia show that Armenia is still “in the wrong forest under the wrong tree”.

Question emerges what is the objective behind this unconstructive position on the eve of the ministerial level negotiations in New York? One can assume that the only reason is to derail negotiation process by all means to secure an unsustainable and unacceptable status-quo in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. We reiterate in this august body that Armenia and its leadership bear all responsibility for escalation of situation with such statements.

The weeks and months ahead is a unique chance for Armenia to demonstrate if it is a serious partner for peace, genuinely interested in engaging in substantive negotiations to resolve the conflict or we will continue down the road of further instability and conflict. We hope Armenia will grasp the reality on the ground and finally engage constructively in the forthcoming meeting between foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia in New York at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Settlement of the conflict can contribute to ensuring of sustainable peace and security in the region and establishment of comprehensive regional cooperation. First of all, the population of Armenia can benefit from such perspectives of regional cooperation. Therefore, a ball is in the court of Armenian side.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

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