

**STATEMENT
by the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**as delivered by Mr. Seymur Mardaliyev,
Counselor of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UNOG in Geneva**

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Agenda item 3
Clustered interactive dialogue with UN SG Special Representative on violence against children
UN SG Special Representative on children and armed conflict**

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My delegation welcomes both Special Representatives to the Council and thanks them for their reports.

Azerbaijan reiterates its commitment to continue supporting the activities of the existing UN mechanisms and other actors aimed at ensuring more effective protection for the child's rights and improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict. We commend proactive engagement from Ms. Gamba since her appointment. We also support her intention to enhance synergies among different stakeholders to raise further awareness of six grave violations against children. Additional focus on advocacy and lessons learned in fulfilling her mandate are welcomed as well.

Current international environment puts more children at risk of being affected by armed conflict than ever before and it is therefore more resolute and targeted measures are required to protect children in situations of armed conflict and to end impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity and other crimes perpetrated against children. Particular consideration should also be given to internally displaced children in the context of ensuring their right to return in safety and dignity and to the implications of illegal policies and practices in situations of foreign occupation for the protection of the child rights. Another challenging issue requiring urgent action is that of children taken hostage and reported missing in connection with armed conflict.

International humanitarian law provides the essence of clear legal obligations binding on all parties to armed conflict. Respect for these obligations is critical, but trend of disrespect for IHL is alarming, unfortunately, including in the region of the South Caucasus.

In the course of the continuing aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan serious violations of humanitarian law amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide were committed. Despite the formal ceasefire, direct and deliberate attacks by Armenian armed forces against civilians and the civilian objects, including schools, kindergartens and health care facilities in Azerbaijan continue to date. Among the victims of the ceasefire violations recorded past year, 2 year old innocent girl Zahra Guliyeva killed as a result of intensive fire and 13 year old boy Ramin Yusifov who received multiple shrapnel wounds as a result of heavy shelling.

Azerbaijan does believe all grave violations of human rights suffered by children in all conflicts without distinction, including those of protracted nature and prolonged impact on children should get equal attention. At the same time, we reiterate our long-standing view that most important protective factor for children, their rights and their healthy development is however the soonest settlement of the armed conflicts on the basis of norms and principles of international law.

Thank you.