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**UN Human Rights Council
Fortieth Session
Clustered Interactive Dialogue
with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief
Statement**

delivered by Shahriyar Hajiyev, Third Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva

March 5, 2019

Mr. President,

We express our gratitude to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief for his report and today's interactive dialogue.

We reaffirm that the existence, realization and enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief is important value of democratic societies.

Let me express that the traditions of multiculturalism and interfaith acceptance have ancient roots in our country. Muslims, Jews and Christians have been living together in peace and mutual respect for many centuries. Azerbaijan is an example of non-existence of religious, ethnic and other forms of discrimination. The Government has built and renovated dozens of religious monuments – mosques, churches and synagogues, and this process is being continued.

Believing in the importance of dialogue to achieve better understanding among peoples of different religions, Azerbaijan regularly carries out activities on global level. In this regard, we would like to note that Azerbaijan will host the 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in May. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres highlighted the international events hosted by Azerbaijan, as a key platform for promoting intercultural dialogue.

Mr. President,

Unfortunately, discrimination and intolerance based on religions are on the rise worldwide. We condemn increased number of cases regarding religious intolerance, in particular Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

In this context, we would like to draw the attention of the distinguished members of the Council to the recent violent attack against the Church of Saint-Eustache in Paris on 26 of February. On that day, a memorial event was organised commemorating the victims of Khojaly genocide that was committed by the Armenian armed forces against the Azerbaijani civilian population. French police intervened the attack of the members of youth organization of the Armenian 'Dashnaktsutyun' party based in Paris. The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan urged the French authorities to take action against the perpetrators of the attack and bring them to justice.

Thank you.