



Check against delivery

**Remarks by the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
as delivered by Ambassador Vaqif Sadiqov,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UNOG in Geneva**

Event on combatting anti-Semitism in Europe and beyond

Geneva, 17 December 2018

Madame Moderator,

Thank you for organizing this important event. We have to look straight into the facts: discrimination and intolerance based on religion, ethnicity and race are widespread worldwide and continue to grow. The international community needs to join efforts in resisting steadily increasing intolerance and violence, in particular anti-Semitism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and attempts to associate religions with terrorism and violent extremism.

Anti-Semitism is not a threat to Jewish communities alone. Where there is anti-Semitism, there are likely to be other discriminatory ideologies. Today, hatred also targets religious and ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees, including elderly people, women and children.

Open and frank discussions of such phenomena as anti-Semitism are necessary to prevent further spread of this evil. In doing so, it is necessary to distinguish political and security aspects of instabilities and conflicts from attempts to provide oversimplified solutions through dividing people into categories of “us” and “them”. Such an approach only plays into hands of ultra-nationalists and populists and seeds mistrust and suspicion in societies.

The history teaches us that intercultural and interreligious dialogue coupled with proper education is the most powerful tool in promoting tolerance, sustainable peace, stability and development, with no alternative available around. We, in Azerbaijan, attach primary importance to promotion of such a dialogue at all levels. Multiculturalism and tolerance based on the principle of “unity in diversity” is a longstanding tradition in my country that strengthens and consolidates our society as well as contributes to ethnic and religious pluralism.

The Jewish community is one of the most ancient ethnic groups in Azerbaijan, with its history ranging for about 2500 years. While by the end of the 90s, about 9000 Jews resided in Azerbaijan, now their number increased up to 12,000. The town of Krasnaya Sloboda in the north of Azerbaijan is the second largest place of compact residence of Jews abroad after Israel itself. At present, 5 Jewish communities function in Azerbaijan, with 8 synagogues open to believers, of which two were built with the government’s funding. The largest Jewish school in the South Caucasus operates in Baku.

The Jewish community played an important role in the development of political, economic, cultural life of Azerbaijan. This year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, first ever democratic Republic in the Muslim Orient. There were 4 Jewish ministers in the government of the first Azerbaijani republic. In modern period, the most prominent representatives of the Jewish community from Azerbaijan have been famous American pianist Bella Davidovich, 1962 Nobel prize winner in physics prof. Lev Landau, world renowned musician and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, to name just a few.

Thus, UN Member States which have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens human rights and address the root causes of intolerance, need to do more together with the UN institutions to disseminate the culture of zero tolerance to anti-Semitism and other similar threats.

Thank you.