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Statement by the Republic of Azerbaijan

General Segment

31st session of the Human Rights Council

2 March 2016, Geneva

Mr. President,

This year we mark the 10th Anniversary of the Human Rights Council, which is the principal United Nations intergovernmental body in the field of human rights. As one of the first members of the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan once again emphasizes the high importance of the Council for protection and promotion of human rights worldwide.

Ensuring human rights and freedoms is a priority for the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Being a party to the core fundamental international legal documents in the field of human rights Azerbaijan actively cooperates with all mechanisms of the Human Rights Council.

The Republic of Azerbaijan recognizes the significant role of Special Procedures of the Human Right Council as one of the major tools of the UN human rights machinery. Azerbaijan has extended voluntary standing invitation to all UN Special Procedures mandate holders. We use this opportunity to call all the countries that have not yet done so, to extend a standing invitation to the special procedures.

We also attach great importance to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism as one of the major successes of this Council. Passing through two fruitful cycles of UPR, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan reiterates its

openness and willingness to further cooperation with UPR mechanism of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. President,

As a multiethnic and multi-confessional country Azerbaijan seeks to contribute to the development of intercultural dialogue and tolerance. Our country strives to step up its efforts to create a spirit of understanding among all peoples and religions. In this regard, we are proud to inform this August body that Azerbaijan will host the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in April 2016 and the Islamic Solidarity Games in 2017.

Mr. President,

It is obvious that peace, security, development, and human rights are interconnected in the world we live nowadays. Along with positive developments there are also challenges to peace and security in Europe, in particular in the South Caucasus. It should be highlighted that the ongoing military occupation by neighbouring Armenia of almost 20% of the territories of Azerbaijan and its grave consequences continue to be a major obstacle for the full provision of human rights in Azerbaijan. In this regard, implementing the relevant UN Security Council resolutions of 1993, putting an end to the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and ensuring the return of the refugees and IDPs to their homes, are essential elements for peace, security and the rights of the victims.

Thank you.