

**Statement by the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**Annual high-level panel on 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Human Rights Covenants**

**31st session of the Human Rights Council**

**1 March 2016, Geneva**

Mr. President,

Distinguished Panelists,

This year we mark the 50th Anniversary of International Human Rights Covenants that constitute legally binding international treaties that cover wide spectrum of human rights.

We once again emphasize the high importance of the Covenants which are also major parts of international efforts to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Republic of Azerbaijan recognizes the important role of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the implementation of the Covenants. In this regard, Azerbaijan as a Party strictly complies with the obligations deriving from the Covenants and continuously implements the recommendations made by the Committees.

Mr. President,

With regard to the interpretation of a right to self-determination as a principle of collective human rights it should be mentioned that, in its General Comment on Self-Determination adopted in 1984 interpreting Article 1 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Committee emphasized that the realization of the right was "an essential condition for the effective guarantee and observance of individual human rights", and also stated that actions of States to facilitate realization of and respect for the right of peoples to self-determination must be consistent with the States' obligations under the Charter of the UN and international law.

As a conclusion it should be stated that the principle of self-determination exists as a rule of international law. As such it provides for the independence of colonial territories and for the participation of peoples in the governance of their states within the territorial framework of such

states. The principle of self-determination also has an application in the case of foreign occupations and acts to sustain the integrity of existing states. The principle of self-determination cannot be interpreted in international law to include a right of secession. International law is unambiguous in not providing for a right of unilateral secession from independent States and in not creating grounds and conditions for legitimizing such secession in any sense, including within the meaning of the right to self-determination.

Thank you.