

Remarks by Azerbaijan  
18<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council  
High-level panel discussion for the promotion  
and protection of HRs through tolerance and reconciliation  
Geneva, 28 September 2011

Ms. President,

We are honored to address this very crucial and important high level panel for the promotion and protection of human rights through tolerance and reconciliation and thank the panelists for sharing their views and ideas with us today.

Being a country with long-standing traditions of tolerance, non-discrimination and peace, Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the intercultural and interreligious dialogue and continues to contribute to this crucial endeavor. For many centuries Muslims, Christians (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestants) and Jews have been continuing to live side by side in our country in conditions of peace, tolerance and mutual respect. They all take part in the political, socio-economic and cultural life of the country and make contribution to Azerbaijan's development.

Problems faced by the religious communities are regularly investigated and relevant governmental agencies render necessary assistance to solve them.

It is our strong conviction that while the national authorities should respect the religious communities' right to freedom of religion or belief, the religious communities should also abide by the national legislation by rejecting all forms of intolerance, spreading radicalism and extremism.

Taking advantage of its own riches and cultural legacy, Azerbaijan is currently assisting in the cultural and religious diversity all over the world. We would like to point out the work of the non-governmental Heydar Aliyev Foundation which provided financial assistance for the restoration of five windows in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Strasbourg Cathedral in June 2009. It also provided material assistance for the repair of two monuments featured at the Palace of Versailles.

As a multinational and multi-religious country the Republic of Azerbaijan is keen on steering its activities through the principles of tolerance and coexistence of various nationalities, ethnic groups and religious minorities.

Thank you for your attention.