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**UN Human Rights Council
Fortieth Session**

**Side event on Diversity Celebration: beyond tolerance the path towards empathy
Remarks**

**by Ms. Marziyya Vakilova-Mardaliyeva, Second secretary of the Permanent
Representation of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other
International Organizations in Geneva**

March 21, 2019

At the outset, let me join others to express our deep grief by dreadful attack to the Mosques in New Zealand. We extend our deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their life and the people of New Zealand.

My delegation welcomes the convening of this timely event. We note with deep concern that despite the advances in international and national law, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Islamophobia and related intolerance continue to be on the rise.

As a country located at the crossroads of various civilizations throughout many centuries, Azerbaijan has formed an atmosphere of tolerance, where representatives of various nationalities and faiths live in peace, mutual understanding and dialogue. The multiculturalism and tolerance historically inherent in the life of Azerbaijanis became an integral feature of everyday life in Azerbaijan based on the principle unity in diversity. In his October 2016 visit to Baku, Pope Francis praised Azerbaijan as a place of religious tolerance.

We believe in crucial role of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in promoting tolerance. With this in mind Azerbaijan has launched Baku Process the goal of which is to strengthen dialogue, partnership and cooperation. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has stressed the role of Baku Process as a platform for promoting dialogue among cultures.

The 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue will be held in early May 2019 in Baku in the framework of the Baku Process to serve as an international platform to enable and encourage people, countries and organizations to advance concrete actions to support diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding as foundations for sustainable peace and inclusive development.

We hope today's deliberations will send a clear message to states for the need to develop proactive policies to prevent and combat intolerances.

I thank you.