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**Remarks by the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
as delivered by Mr. Seymur Mardaliyev,
Counselor of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UNOG in Geneva**

**Agenda item 6: Regional activities and global programmes
74th session of the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High
Commissioner's Programme**

Geneva, 7 March 2019

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the Director of the Bureau for Europe and her team to the Standing Committee and would like to thank her for presenting the update on the UNHCR operations in this part of the world.

Azerbaijan acknowledges a long-standing fruitful cooperation with UNHCR which remains to be one of the key international humanitarian partners for us.

Along with refugees and asylum seekers, Europe also hosts the significant number of internally displaced persons. We do hope UNHCR will remain actively engaged with IDP situations closely cooperating with the national authorities. The protracted nature of these situations should receive the attention it deserves. Here, we believe UNHCR can and has to play a more active catalyst role in attracting the attention to the protracted IDP situations in the region. In this context, we would appreciate, Madame Director, if you could elaborate on ways for UNHCR's catalyst role vis-à-vis the protracted internal displacement, specifically in the region of South Caucasus. This is particular important for IDPs in protracted situations since these people have to feel they are still in the radar of the international community in the absence of the political settlement of the root causes that led to the displacement.

Azerbaijan's sensitiveness to IDPs cause is understandable as we host one of the largest internally displaced population per capita in the world. About 300 000 IDPs have been so far provided by the Government of Azerbaijan with new houses in the newly established settlements. In 2018 alone, the national authorities improved living conditions for 5800 IDP families in another two large IDP settlements constructed. Huge resources were invested in the course of last 25 years to address social problems of displaced population which has resulted in significant decrease of poverty and unemployment among them.

We remain also committed to our continuing dialogue with UNHCR in areas related to international protection and appreciate UNHCR's assistance in establishing an effective asylum system in Azerbaijan. The competent authorities continue to improve national legislation and practices in line with international standards. We expect UNHCR will continue rendering the capacity building support to the authorities in strengthening national asylum system. Azerbaijan looks forward to next week's high-level meeting within the UNHCR implemented project on Asylum Systems Quality Initiative that will take place here in Geneva.

We also invite UNHCR to pay careful attention to the attempts to misuse sufferings of refugees from the Middle East, particular from Syria and Iraq that continue to be resettled in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in a grave violation of the international humanitarian law. Without adequate and timely

reaction, the illegal resettlement policy carried out in the occupied territories could complicate a search towards durable solutions for displaced people by creating obstacles for ensuring the right of the expelled indigenous Azerbaijani population to return voluntarily to their native lands in safety and dignity and subsequently prolong their protracted situation.

In closing, we reaffirm our full support to the mandate of UNHCR and readiness to further broaden the cooperation with the Agency in the months and years ahead.

I thank you.