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**UN Human Rights Council  
Fortieth Session**

**Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on privacy and the Special  
Rapporteur on cultural rights**

**Statement**

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

**March 1, 2019**

Mr. President,

We thank both Special rapporteurs for presenting their reports and congratulate Ms. K. Bennoune on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the mandate she holds.

We commend the focus on cultural heritage in her report as a human rights issue. Indeed, access to and enjoyment of cultural heritage finds its legal basis in various human rights norms.

As one of the areas of earliest human settlement with a rich historical past and diverse cultural legacy, Azerbaijan relies on its commitment to the preservation of its cultural heritage and ensuring right to access to and enjoyment of it. For this reason, a special database on intangible cultural heritage has been developed in my country. This year the 43rd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee will be held in Azerbaijan.

However, the occupation of Azerbaijani lands by Armenia has also had catastrophic consequences for our cultural heritage both in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and in Armenia. Azerbaijani population forcibly expelled from their own lands, are prevented from exercising their human rights, namely to have access to their cultural heritage, to worship in their mosques and to tend their family graves. Historical and cultural monuments in the occupied Azerbaijani territories have been looted, vandalized or destroyed by Armenia. The Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage in Armenia shared the same fate.

By destroying the monuments and changing architectural features, Armenia pursues far-reaching targets of removing any signs heralding their Azerbaijani origins. Such acts by Armenia are in a gross violation of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Protocol.

Madame Special Rapporteur, as stated in the preamble of the Hague Convention damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind. Would you reflect on possible effective measures which could stop such vandalism against the universal cultural heritage?

I thank you.