

**Statement by
Mr. Fuad Huseynov
Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally
Displaced Persons of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

Madame Vice President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure and honour to address the distinguished audience during the forty-first session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations. I would like to extend sincere welcome to each and every one of you and wish every success in the course of the session.

Speaking on the human rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is particularly important for me, because my country – Azerbaijan hosts one of the highest numbers of IDPs and refugees in the world.

In general, the topic of the people that forcibly expelled from their homes and lands of origin is very high in the agenda of the international community as one of the most urgent and complicated issues.

We share the view that this phenomenon is truly multi-dimensional and cross-cutting as it was stated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Antonio Guterres during the session of the General Assembly of the United Nations - the problem is not refugees, IDPs or migrants, the problem lies in conflict, persecution and hopeless poverty.

Indeed, while the number of persons fleeing their homes has reached unprecedented 71 million persons, we see no solutions in sight for too many conflicts that continue to produce displacement and human sufferings.

While the plight of refugees and migrants make the headlines, the international community must also keep in mind millions of internally displaced persons. Women and children have been made extremely vulnerable by conflicts and who still find themselves in protracted situations in different corners of the globe.

According to UNHCR, the number of IDPs has reached 41 million all over the world and it is almost double the number of 25 million when the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement was adopted twenty years ago.

Azerbaijan fully supports all efforts to raise the visibility to suffering of IDPs and references to IDPs in the 2030 Agenda - the goal set by the Agenda for humanity to reduce internal displacement by at least 50% by 2030 and as well as New York

Declaration for refugees and migrants which noted the need for reflection on effective strategies to ensure adequate protection and assistance to IDPs are of course right steps but they are not sufficient.

The grave situation of millions of IDPs require strong attention and addressing root causes and concerted actions at all levels.

We believe that Human Rights Council should also be used as a platform for elaborating comprehensive response addressing the protection of the human rights of internally displaced persons.

Azerbaijan's sensitivity to IDPs is clearly understandable. Displacement in my country is a consequence of the on-going military aggression and occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan that resulted with almost one million refugees and IDPs in particular nearly 250 000 refugees that fled from their homes in Armenia and became refugees in Azerbaijan and nearly 700 000 IDPs and 50 000 Meskhetian Turks that fled to other parts of Azerbaijan from Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts.

Beginning of the crises in early 1990s - immediately after gaining independence, Azerbaijan found itself in the midst of military conflict compounded with economic disarray. At that time, the economy did not have sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of the IDPs and refugees.

If there had been no assistance of the international community, the multilateral donors and single donors, the country would have faced a humanitarian catastrophe. We are thankful to all international organisations, particularly United Nations and single donor countries.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take the opportunity and highlight the measures taken by the Government of Azerbaijan in addressing the problems of IDPs and refugees. These activities can be characterised as creating living conditions for IDPs in the places where they are currently residing until political solution to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is found, enabling the right of return of the IDPS to their homes.

The Government of Azerbaijan has done a lot to alleviate the suffering of these people and continues to do so both in legal and socio-economic fields. Thirty-four Laws have been adopted by the national parliament regarding the issues of the IDPs including three of which are of particular relevance to the situation of IDPs and refugees - "Law on citizenship", "Law on refugee and IDP status" and "Law on social protection of IDPs and persons equated to them".

At the beginning of the crises, thousands of peoples had to live in dire conditions - in tent camps and different types of unfinished buildings and starting from 2001, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan started to an ambitious State Programme for solving the problems of the IDPs. Today, the Government provides improved living conditions for the IDPs. Until now, 103 new residential settlements and complexes have been erected in different parts of the country. The Government has managed to relocate as many as 58 000 families or 300 000 IDPs and provides them improved living conditions on a temporary basis.

Overall, as a result of activities pursued by the national authorities and international organisations in the last 18 years' time, the poverty level among the IDPs has dropped from 75% to 12%.

In total, 7.1 billion dollars were allocated for addressing social problems of IDPs out of which 3.4 billion allocated from state budget, 2.3 billion were allocated from State Oil Fund, and the remaining 1.4 billion were from international organisations.

The only durable solution to the solving the problems of the IDPs is the solution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which would enable the exercising of the basic rights of the IDPs - the right of return that has been stated in the reports of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs during the course of their visits.

In this regard, I would like to transmit the questions of the IDPs that have been asked by them daily - When they can return back to their homes and native lands? Until what time they will remain as IDPs? Why the international community turns blind eye to the violation of the human rights of Azerbaijani IDPs?

Finally, I would like to state that restoring historical justice for the IDPs is the only durable solution for the sustainable peace and security.

Thank you for your attention.