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**The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

34<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

Interactive dialogue with SR on minority issues

Statement delivered by Emin Aslanov

15 March 2017

Thank you Chair,

Madame Special Rapporteur, we thank you for your extensive presentation on the wide range of activities you have undertaken throughout your six years tenure.

We think that the list of major challenges you have reflected on in your report is worrying and demands significant attention. Increased hate speech, xenophobic rhetoric and incitement to hatred against minorities, coupled with the rise of far-right and extremist political parties worldwide are disturbing factors for the peaceful coexistence of people. Unfortunately, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism have become another deplorable trend in some parts of world.

My country has historically been a place for the peaceful co-existence of the members of different ethnics and religions, and the issue of promotion of religious and cultural diversity has always been high on our agenda.

Full-effect is given to the right of minorities to establish their own schools, national cultures centers, associations and other organizations. Dozens of newspapers and magazines are published in language of minorities. The minorities are represented in Parliament and in all state structures.

Having acknowledged that, opting for promotion and protection of multiculturalism rather than cultural and ethnic isolation, is the best way to pursue for the prosperity of our societies, Azerbaijan attaches great importance to promoting intercultural dialogue not only within the country but also worldwide, and for this purpose my country hosts a number of international events bringing ministers, heads international organizations, senior policy makers, cultural professionals, experts, journalists and prominent intellectuals together. In this regard it worth to mention that Azerbaijan will host the next World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku on 5-6 May of this year.

In conclusion, Madame Rapporteur, we would like to reiterate our commitment to further promotion and protection of rights of all minorities.

Thank you.