

**Remarks by the Republic of Azerbaijan**

31<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

Item 9 - Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

21 March 2016, Geneva

Mr. President,

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action provide a new and innovative anti-discrimination agenda, and, as such, constitute an essential element of an emerging global dialogue on how to eliminate the scourge of racial discrimination from our world. It is very unfortunate that people in all parts of the world continue to suffer daily from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, which is still a permanent challenge to the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Azerbaijan as a multiethnic and multi-confessional country carries out its national policy in all fields with the consideration of traditional tolerance and harmonic co-existence of different national, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The equality of all citizens without any distinction is guaranteed by the national legislation.

Next month, Azerbaijan will host the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which works toward a more peaceful, more socially inclusive world, by building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities, and highlighting the will of the world to embrace diversity.

We would like to underline the importance of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) as the principal international instrument to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Azerbaijan has been and will remain committed to the Convention. While acknowledging the efforts of Azerbaijan to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in and around Nagorno Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) was deeply concerned about the persistence of this conflict and its negative influence on the exercise and full enjoyment of the rights by the Azerbaijani internally displaced persons.

Mr. President,

As a result of the aggression of Armenia, almost 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan continues to remain under occupation and more than one million Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs are unable to return to their homes.

Further, suffice it to mention that, unlike Armenia, which has implemented a policy of total ethnic cleansing of both its own territory and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan of all non-Armenians, and thus, succeeded in creating a uniquely mono-ethnic culture in those areas, Azerbaijan has preserved its ethnic and cultural diversity to the present day. It is worth to note that currently, there are 30.000 Armenians living in Azerbaijan which clearly demonstrates the policy of intercultural tolerance existing in Azerbaijan.

In 1993, the United Nations Security Council adopted four resolutions, which demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and reaffirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, Armenia continues to ignore the calls of the international community.

What is even more worrisome is that, instead of preparing its people for peace, prosperous and stable future in friendship and cooperation with neighboring countries, the leadership of Armenia continues to publicly incite the future generations to new wars, violence and aggression, and propagate by all means the dangerous ideas of animosity and hatred towards not only Azerbaijan, but also other peoples of the region. It is very regretful that racial superiority and hatred is the state policy of Armenia. We therefore urge the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council to pay due attention to the animosity propaganda and hate dissemination in Armenia.