

Statement by Mr. Firudin Nabiyeu, Chief of the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the 67th Session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Geneva, 3 October 2016

**Dear Mr. Chairman,
Dear Mr. High Commissioner,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,**

First of all, I would like to greet you on behalf of the Government of Azerbaijan and congratulate Mr. Filippo Grandi on his appointment as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and wish him every success in his work.

This session of the Executive Committee is held after the high-level historic meeting on refugees and migrants in New York on 19 September 2016. Azerbaijan welcomes the “New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants” as a fundamental step towards international cooperation and officially appreciates the UNHCR's role as a catalyst for the process to create conditions for a global and effective response against the problem of forced displacement and the formal inclusion of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to the UN family as part of that event.

Cooperation between the Government of Azerbaijan and UNHCR remains firm and productive, and strictly supports the mandate and activities of UNHCR. Asylum and migration problems can be solved effectively only through international cooperation. Recently, we have witnessed it.

Despite the scale of the problem of refugees and IDPs in our country the Government of Azerbaijan is interested in providing timely assistance to the people affected by humanitarian disasters in the world directly or through international organizations. The national donor institution the Azerbaijan International Development Agency (AIDA) is responsible for the implementation of projects on humanitarian aid around the world. The agency is providing humanitarian assistance to the people belonging to vulnerable groups, as well as developing the capacity building programs in the areas of health, education, energy, information and communication technologies. The aim is to support the achievement the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the affected countries.

It should be noted with regret that, in the aftermath of the last Session the scope of migration has expanded rapidly for various reasons - conflicts, wars, natural disasters and persecution in the world, and as a result the number of people who were forced to leave their countries and places of permanent residence has reached the highest level in the world.

Unresolved conflicts continue creating a new influx of refugees and maintain a state of constant uncertainty for millions of women, men and children who want to return home. Most of the time, in the receiving countries, instead of compassion, tolerance, the discrimination and xenophobia are demonstrated to the refugees and migrants who escape from death and torture. This, of course, makes their already difficult situation even more difficult.

We are well aware of the plight of these people, because Azerbaijan is also a country that has faced an occupation. As you know, at the beginning of the 1990s, Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, ethnic cleansing and occupation by Armenia of 20% of Azerbaijan's territory, led to the displacement people from their homes and this conflict has not been resolved yet. As a result of this occupation, thousands industrial and social objects, as well as historical and cultural monuments have been destroyed. According to preliminary calculations the damage to Azerbaijan's economy has been estimated at \$500 billion. But of course, the most important loss is our 30.000 citizens having lost their lives in the war.

With around 10 million population Azerbaijan has been solving the problems of refugees, internally displaced people, whose number has grown up to more than one million two hundred thousand due to the natural growth, while respecting the international laws, fulfilling its obligations properly for about 30 years.

In order to improve the living conditions of this group of people 95 residential complexes have been built according to modern standards, 50.000 families of more than 250.000 refugees and internally displaced persons have been provided with new apartments at the expense of the State Oil Fund. Until now, about \$6 billion has been spent for the solution of their social problems.

The national legislation of the country has been fully adapted to the already signed international treaties on refugees and internally displaced persons, and even in some cases, it is more completely adapted to define superior rights.

As noted repeatedly by a number of international organizations, the state care for the people of this contingency and the experience of Azerbaijan in managing this problem from a single center can be used as a model in other countries.

However, a large portion of these people live in hard conditions even today. Therefore, international organizations and donors should not detract attention from the issue and continue to support our country.

Mr. High Commissioner,

First of all, in order to solve the problems existing in this field in the world, the political interests should be put aside, serious ground should be established to avoid new conflicts and concrete steps should be taken. The resolution of existing conflicts should be based on the principles of the international law, in particular the sovereignty, territorial integrity and

inviolability of internationally recognized borders. The states should cooperate with each other and international organizations including such international organizations as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, and the International Committee of the Red Cross more closely in order to solve the problems of vulnerable people.

Dear colleagues,

Azerbaijan has repeatedly stressed and today I think it is important to point out that it is necessary to adopt an international convention on the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons having the legal obligations similar to the Convention adopted within the framework of the African Union.

It should be noted with regret that some countries abuse the refugee and migration problems in the world for their own political interests. Armenia, which states in international fora, that it has received a large number of Syrian refugees, deploys the refugees from their own country as well as other countries particularly those from Syria in the occupied Azerbaijani territories contrary to the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1949 and continues changing the historical names of Azerbaijani lands. Two such incidents have been registered during the visit of the OSCE Fact-Finding Mission to the region.

Armenia does not observe the ceasefire today, regularly opens a fire at civilians and residential areas. Although 30 years have passed, the conflict is not solved, the injustice continues, the relevant decisions and resolutions adopted by the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, OIC and other international organizations remain not implemented, the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group do not give any result.

The problem faced by Azerbaijan is not the problem of the region only but the one for the whole world. Azerbaijan's position on the resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is clear: all the Azerbaijani territories should be released from the Armenian occupation and the right of IDPs to return to their homes with dignity should be guaranteed.

Thank you for your attention.