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**Interactive Dialogue with the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict
Statement
delivered by Mr. Shahriyar Hajiyev
Third Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan
to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva**

09 March 2021

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President,

The full version of the statement will be on the extranet.

We welcome the Special Representatives of the UN SG for children and armed conflict and thank her for her report.

Azerbaijan is worried about the continuous harmful and widespread impact of armed conflicts on children with its short-term and long-term consequences. The negative impact of armed conflicts on children usually manifest itself in various forms.

In this connection, we condemn the recruitment, training and use of children in armed hostilities. We also condemn the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict and direct attacks on objects protected under international humanitarian law, including places that generally have a significant presence of children, such as schools, kindergartens and hospitals.

Another horrible aspect of impact of armed conflicts is the displacement of children as a result of armed conflicts. Children, many of them who lost their parents or separated from their families, are at a particularly high risk of human rights violations and abuses. We do concur with the Special Representative that in time of conflict, along with targeted attacks on schools, education is also often interrupted due to a general climate of fear and insecurity or because of the displacement of school children, teachers and school personnel.

Mr. Vice-President,

Unfortunately, Armenia's first active aggression against Azerbaijan in 1992-1994 had resulted in hundreds of Azerbaijani children being killed by Armenian soldiers, with 92 children taken hostage, 70 of them still missing, 3393 children losing one parent, 120 children losing both of their parents, hundreds of thousands of children becoming refugees and IDPs because of brutal ethnic cleansing policy of Armenia.

For almost 30 years, Azerbaijan continuously brought these flagrant violations of the rights of children and grave crimes committed against Azerbaijani children by aggressor Armenia, to the attention of international community, including of your office since its inception. However, it is unfortunate that Armenia's war crimes never saw an adequate attention and response by international community, encouraging this country to further violate international law and committing new war crimes against Azerbaijani children.

During the recent aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan in the period of September 27, to November 10, 2020, encouraged by the impunity, this country has been enjoying for 30 years, its military indiscriminately and deliberately attacked residential areas with ballistic missiles, rockets, and heavy artillery, including banned cluster munitions that resulted in more than 500 civilian casualties. Among them, 101 civilians, including 12 infant and minor children were killed; 423 civilians, including over 50 children were injured.

Apart from its continued violation of the rights of Azerbaijani children, during the recent hostilities, Armenia did not hesitate to violate basic the rights of Armenian children either. The videos proudly spread on social media by Armenian users demonstrated that Armenia widely employed children as soldiers in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. By using children as combatants Armenia deprived the children of their fundamental rights, in particular the right to life and the right to protection, as children might have been lethally affected by the military attacks targeting at military objects and combatants.

By using children in the military operations Armenia violates the protection guaranteed for children by the IV Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians and Additional Protocol which provides that "children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault". By its reckless actions, Armenia also grossly violated the child rights enshrined in the UN Child Rights Convention, its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, in particular Article 1 and Article 2.

Moreover, Armenia which used to present itself as one of the "advocates" of the Safe Schools Declaration, intentionally used school and kindergarten buildings for military purposes, which is another demonstration of its failure to respect the protection of future generations.

During 30 years of its occupation, Armenia has destroyed tens of thousands of public and private property, including more than 600 schools and kindergartens in the territories of Azerbaijan.

We firmly condemn the violation of the rights of children by Armenia in blatant ignorance of international conventions and its commitments under international humanitarian law and call the related international stakeholder, including the Special Representative of the UN SG on children and armed conflict to thoroughly investigate these illegal practices and take necessary measures to put an end to the impunity Armenia has been enjoying for three decades.

I thank you.