



**UN Human Rights Council
Forty-sixth Session**

Agenda item 3

Interactive dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Statement

**delivered by Mr. Seymur Mardaliyev,
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan
to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva**

Geneva, 4 March 2021

Mr. Vice-President,

My delegation welcomes the Special Rapporteur on human rights and environment to the Council and thanks him for presenting his report. We share the view expressed in the report that water pollution, water scarcity and water-related disasters have major impacts on a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, water, sanitation, food, health environment, education and on the rights of the child.

On a national level, Azerbaijan takes a holistic approach to ensure that environment and water resources are well-managed so that everyone has access to affordable high-quality water, sanitation and a clean, safe and sustainable environment in line with relevant SDGs.

We believe that due attention should also be devoted to the effects of armed conflicts on human rights and environment since water resources are used as a weapon to create environmental disaster in conflict-affected areas and making normal life impossible for population concerned.

This was exactly what we have witnessed throughout the 30 years-long occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia with water resources to be at the core of the Armenia's ecological terror. Armenia has used Sərsəng water reservoir in then-occupied Qarabağ region as a tool to deliberately deprive Azerbaijani civilians of access to drinking and irrigation water. Armenia blocked the Sərsəng reservoir flowing to the Azerbaijani regions during summer while opening flood gates to these regions in winter thus causing seasonal water problems in recent years. At the same time, chemical pollution and contamination of freshwater resources in the Qarabağ region resulted in a destruction of rich biodiversity of the region.

Armenia has also attempted to target Mingəçevir water reservoir, a largest reservoir in the South Caucasus and essential facility for power generation and agriculture by ballistic missiles during the recent aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan in September-November 2020.

If destroyed, it would lead to a humanitarian and environmental catastrophe, loss of unique biodiversity and irreparable damage to the environment of Azerbaijan and broader region. The environmental destruction has further exacerbated due to the use of prohibited white phosphorus projectiles by Armenia in the course of the military hostilities.

Throughout years of occupation of the Azerbaijani territories, while enjoying impunity Armenia has destroyed natural monuments, rich and endemic flora and fauna on these territories. Natural resources have been plundered, 163 mineral resources deposits as well as forest cover, rare trees have been subjected to illegal exploitation by Armenia and foreign companies illegally operating in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in violation of the human rights of the owners of these lands – 700,000 Azerbaijani internally displaced persons who were ethnically cleansed from these territories in 1992-1993.

Mr. Vice-President,

The environmental terror committed by Armenia in the de-occupied territories of Azerbaijan constitutes a war crime in accordance with the international law and will severely affect livelihoods and basic human rights of Azerbaijani displaced population who have to return to the liberated territories in accordance with the provisions of the trilateral statement signed by Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on 10 November 2020 on cessation of hostilities.

I thank you.