



**Statement by the Delegation of Azerbaijan
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 7: Humanitarian issues
and other commitments
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As delivered by Fidan Mahmudova
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The Delegation of Azerbaijan shares the concerns over the scale and increasing number of challenges in the area of combating **trafficking in human beings** in the OSCE area and beyond, which has recently deteriorated due to the ongoing migration crisis

Our Delegation supports intention of the Office of the Special Representative to pay particular attention to addressing **human trafficking in crises**, as well as to systematic targeting of root causes of crimes of human trafficking. We recall the OSCE PC decision (No.557 of 2003), where participating States expressed *concern that root causes of trafficking in human beings, remain insufficiently tackled, in particular causes such as, inter alia, unresolved conflicts and post-conflict situations.*

The national legal and policy framework has evolved in the light of the country's international commitments and therefore strong legislation base covering all the aspects of combating human trafficking and **efficient struggle-coordinating structure** was established based on the previous two National Action Plans. The third NAP covering the years 2014-2018 is aimed at revealing and eradicating reasons for trafficking in human beings, cases leading to it, protection, restoration of rights of victims and their social rehabilitation along with defending person or society from all types of trafficking in human beings.

All victims are provided with medical, legal, psychological, financial, as well shelter assistance and support for their reintegration into society. Furthermore, all victims possess the right to receive compensation and a renewable residence permit is granted to foreign or stateless victims. Our legislation provides **non-punishment of victims of trafficking for their involvement in unlawful activities** to the extent they have been compelled to do so, protective measures are also available under the national law to protect victims of trafficking.

The Delegation of Azerbaijan would like to reiterate the importance of international protection and assistance to **refugees and internally displaced persons**. Plight of refugees and other persons of concern does not affect only hosting countries, but rather have much a wider effect in the security and stability of the whole region. Thus, it necessitates unified efforts of all international community, including the OSCE and its participating States.

Azerbaijan has been coping with the problem of **forcible displacement** for more than 25 years. My country has faced a large-scale internal displacement problem due to **occupation of its territories by Armenia**. The number of Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs from the Armenia – Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict is more than one million. Azerbaijan hosts, in per capita terms, one of the highest caseloads of refugees and IDPs in the world.

Protection of this vulnerable group and restoration of their violated rights and freedoms is a priority of the Government of Azerbaijan that strives to promote durable solutions for their social problems. Despite the enormous efforts made by Azerbaijan, the full solution of IDP and refugee problems is still very difficult to achieve. About 400 000 IDPs continue to live under difficult conditions in old and unsuitable houses.

IDPs continue to face problems, some of which are increasingly related to the **protracted nature of their displacement**. The full restoration of the human rights of IDPs and refugees requires first and foremost, a resolution to the outstanding peace negotiations on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijan's position in this issue is crystal clear – **liberation of all Azerbaijani territories from occupation**, return of IDPs to their places of origin, restoration of normal life between the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities, and then determination of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

It is more than 25 years that **Armenia grossly violates norms and principles of international law**, continues efforts towards consolidation of its aggression policy, as well as current status-quo and hinders return of thousands of Azerbaijani IDPs to their homeland. Against this background, the policy and practice of Armenia testifies to its intention to maintain the unacceptable status-quo through various illegal activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

As seen from the above mentioned the primary responsibility for IDPs and refugees rests with national governments. What is urgently needed is to tackle the root causes of forced displacement, the most primary of which is armed conflicts. Governments and international organisations should stick to the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of internationally recognised borders of states.

It is also vitally important to strengthen the role of and cooperation with international organisations and institutions, such as OSCE/ODIHR, UNHCR, UN Special Rapporteurs, CoE, ICRC, IOM through exchange of information, joint projects and activities, seminars and conferences.

In light of the above-mentioned, we call on all OSCE participating States, as well as OSCE executive structures to pay close attention to the issue of protection of refugees and IDPs in the OSCE area, in particular in the context of armed conflicts and to take into due account the needs of this vulnerable group in their future activities. We further reiterate our call on the Austrian Chairmanship of the OSCE to include this important topic into the agenda of the human dimension events.