

Statement by the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Working session 11

Monday, 28 September 2015.

Humanitarian issues and other commitments, including:

- Address by the OSCE special representative/Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
- Combating trafficking in human beings
- Refugees and displaced persons

Madam Moderator,

As it is well-known Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict generated a huge displacement problem which continues to be a challenge to address. At the time of the ceasefire in 1994, Azerbaijan hosted an estimated 250,000 Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan is about 700,000 according to the Government. Given its 9 million population, Azerbaijan has the largest per capita IDP burden in the world.

Despite the cease-fire and termination of hostilities achieved in May 1994, the conflict is still not over. A political resolution has not been achieved and the efforts of the international community, especially of the OSCE Minsk Group, have not yet yielded any result.

While there are IDPs living in every district of the country, the majority live in and around the capital Baku and Sumgayit. Other significant numbers live in rural settlements close to the contact line. Displaced persons living in urban areas merge and live side by side with the local population. Those living in rural areas, however, often live in isolated settlements far from local towns. Overall, relations with the local populations have been positive, marked by understanding for their situation and the general absence of discrimination.

Despite the huge efforts made by the Government for solving housing and social problems of IDP's, they 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 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 – upon liberation of all Azerbaijani territories from the Armenian occupation, return of IDPs to their places of origin and restoration of normal life between the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities.

With regard the abovementioned the ongoing practice of the Republic of Armenia to illegally transfer persons of Armenian descent to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in order to

illegally change the demographic composition of the occupied territories is of particular concern.

The settlement of Armenians in the occupied territories runs contrary to the norms of the international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Convention on Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, which prohibits the occupying power to change demographic composition, social, physical and historical character of the occupied territories. Moreover, the resettlement policy of Armenia grossly violates the rights of hundred thousands of Azerbaijanis forcefully dispelled from the occupied territories and aims at creating a human shield against their return.

It is of serious concern that illegal transfer of Armenians to the occupied territories has been significantly intensified in the light of ongoing crisis in Syria. In its special report of 2013 on humanitarian crisis in Syria, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly noted that 29 families, roughly 99 Syrian Armenians were resettled in the occupied Lachin region. According to other sources, including those of Armenia, the number of Syrian-Armenians illegally settled in the occupied Azerbaijani territories is in thousands. The main destinations of settlements are occupied Lachin, Kelbajar and Zangilan regions, where the authorities of Armenia, as well as Armenian Diaspora offer special incentives for new comers.

Illegal transfer of Armenians to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is a serious challenge to ongoing efforts for finding peaceful solution to the conflict. It further complicates the already difficult situation in negotiations.

Occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and ethnic cleansing of the local Azerbaijani population does not represent a solution and will never produce outcome desired by Armenia.

In the light of abovementioned, we call on OSCE participating States, in particular the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group and its member-states to take effective measures to stop Armenia's policy of illegal settlements in the occupied territories and persuade Armenia to constructively engage in negotiations for finding solution to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. In this context, Azerbaijani delegation recalls its appeal to the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, in which Azerbaijani side has requested to organize a fact-finding mission to the occupied territories with a view to addressing the illegal activities therein, including the illegal transfer of population to these territories.

Thank you.