



Hügelgasse 2, A-1130 Vienna Tel: +43 (1) 403 13 22 Fax: +43 (1) 403 13 23 E-mail: vienna@mission.mfa.gov.az

PC.DEL/145/14
21 February 2014

ENGLISH only

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
984th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
20 February, 2014

*In response to H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres,
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*

Mr. Chairperson,

We warmly welcome H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and thank him for his informative intervention. I would like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE for inviting the High Commissioner to the meeting of the Permanent Council and encourage them to continue keeping the issue of forced displacement high on the OSCE agenda.

Forced displacement caused by ongoing armed conflicts in the OSCE area and beyond represents one of the most serious security concerns for the conflict affected States and refugees hosting countries. Given the UNHCR mandate and OSCE's core function of a primary institution for comprehensively addressing conflict cycle matters, we consider two Organizations as natural partners. Therefore, Azerbaijan wishes to see broader cooperation between the OSCE and UNHCR both in the field and at the headquarters level.

Although, primary responsibility for addressing cases of forced displacement rests with the participating States, OSCE has to follow more consistently situations of violent mass displacement.

Refugees and displaced persons emerged as a result of protracted conflicts in the OSCE area already for many years have been deprived of exercising their fundamental human rights, including the right to live in dignity in their native lands. Our Delegation wishes to see similar attention given to such violations by those OSCE Delegations which traditionally keep human rights issues high on their agenda.

For these purposes we suggest for the OSCE Swiss Chairmanship and UNHCR organizing a special event which might serve as a forum for general discussions related to protection of rights of refugees and IDPs, sharing best practices, for specific thematic deliberations related to IDP and refugee problems in existing protracted conflicts, as well as for planning and preparation of return of IDPs and refugees to their homeland. The Azerbaijani Government would be ready to support such an event.

We appreciate the work carried out to prepare the “Protection Checklist” jointly by the OSCE and UNHCR. We will examine this publication and explore how it could be applied, especially in the context of protracted conflicts in the OSCE area.

We wish to stress that engagement of the newly established OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Baku in cooperation with UNHCR and other local partners to the projects related to the rights of IDPs and refugees would be a priority for the Government of Azerbaijan and we expect appropriate support from CPC and Swiss Chairmanship in this regard.

One of the potential areas for engaging the OSCE and UNHCR field presences in Azerbaijan would be their contribution to the state program, which is called “Big Return”. The program designed as a Contingency Plan and financed by the Government of Azerbaijan envisages right of return of the displaced Azerbaijani population to their lands of origin in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and 7 adjacent districts of Azerbaijan after peace agreement is signed. The program also seeks to identify what measures would be necessary for a peaceful and dignified return of IDPs, including demining of the territories, restoring infrastructure, rehabilitating lands, creating employment opportunities and training of local administration and municipalities.

We hope to see UNHCR Office and OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Baku among partners in this endeavor.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, we reiterate our support to Mr. Antonio Guterres and wish him every success in his activities.

Thank you.