

**Statement by Fuad HUSEYNOV,  
Deputy Minister for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced  
Persons of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
at the Human Dimension Implementaion Meeting organized  
under the OSCE  
Warsaw, September 20, 2019**

Excellences, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure and honour to address the distinguished audience during the OSCE's Annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and I would like to extend sincere welcome to each and every one of you and wish every success in the course of the session.

Let me first start by transmitting questions tens of thousands of IDPs are posing on a daily basis - When are we going back to our homes and native lands? Why the international community turns blind eye to the restoration of our fundamental human rights to return?

Speaking on the issue of human rights of IDPs is particularly important for me, because my country – Azerbaijan hosts, in per capita terms, one of the highest caseloads of IDPs and refugees in the world.

In general, the topic of the people forcibly expelled from their homes and lands of origin is very high in the agenda of the international community as one of the most urgent and complicated issues. We share the view that this phenomenon is truly multi-dimensional cross-cutting as it was stated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations during the session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the problem is not "refugees, IDPs or migrants", the problem lies in conflicts, persecution and hopeless poverty.

Indeed, while the number of persons fleeing their homes has reached unprecedented 71 million persons, we see no solutions in sight for too many conflicts that continue to produce displacement and human sufferings.

While the plight of refugees and migrants make the headlines, the international community must also keep in mind millions of internally displaced persons, women and children made extremely vulnerable by conflicts and who still find themselves in protracted situations in different corners of the globe.

According to UNHCR, the number of IDPs has reached 41 million all over the world and it is almost double the number of 25 million when the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were adopted twenty years ago.

Azerbaijan fully supports all efforts to raise the visibility to the sufferings of IDPs. The references to IDPs in the 2030 Agenda, the goal set by the Agenda for humanity to reduce internal displacement by at least 50% by 2030 and as well as New York Declaration for refugees and migrants, which noted the need for reflection on effective strategies to ensure adequate protection and assistance to IDPs are of course right steps but clearly not sufficient. The grave situation of millions of IDPs requires strong attention and addressing root causes and concerted actions at all levels. We believe that OSCE's HDIM should also be used as a platform for elaborating comprehensive response addressing the protection of the human rights of internally displaced persons.

Azerbaijan's sensitivity to IDPs' cause is clearly understandable. Displacement in my country is a consequence of the on-going military aggression and occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan by Armenia that resulted in almost one million refugees and IDPs.

Beginning of the crises in early 1990s – immediately after gaining independence, Azerbaijan found itself in the midst of a military conflict compounded with economic disarray. At that time, the economy did not have sufficient financial resources to cater for the needs of IDPs and refugees.

If there had been no assistance of the international community, the multilateral donors and single donors, the country would have faced a humanitarian catastrophe. We are thankful to all multilateral and bilateral donors and national organisations, particularly OSCE member states for the support at the most crucial period of our history.

Distinguished delegates,

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the measures taken by the Government of Azerbaijan in addressing the problems of IDPs and refugees. These activities can be characterised as temporary improvement of the living conditions of IDPs in the places where they are currently residing until a political settlement to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is found, enabling the fundamental right of IDPs to return to their homes.

The Government of Azerbaijan has done a lot to alleviate the sufferings of these people and continues to do so both in legal and socio-economic fields.

At the beginning of the crises, thousands of peoples had to live in dire conditions. Starting from 2001, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan embarked on an ambitious State Programme for addressing the problems of IDPs. Today, the Government provides improved living conditions for 300,000 IDPs and poverty level dropped from 75 to 12 percent. The Government allocates funds for the further improvement of the living conditions of refugees and IDPs.

However, the only durable solution to the protracted situation of displacement, as stated by UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights of IDPs in the course of their

missions, is closely linked to the political settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which could enable IDPs to exercise their fundamental right to return - voluntarily and in dignity. In this regard, the Government of Azerbaijan has developed a comprehensive repatriation programme called the "Great Return" which asserts the principle of voluntary return in the context of an eventual peaceful settlement of the conflict.

With last changes in Armenia's regime there were some hopes and expectations for a more constructive approach to this end. However, recent destructive and provocative statements by Armenian leadership Quote "Nagorno Karabakh is Armenia. full stop" Unquote openly demonstrate again that Armenia's real aim is the occupation hidden behind the curtain of so-called 'right to self-determination', and puts the region face-to-face with threats and risks, intentionally escalating the situation to divert public attention from its domestic issues.

The calls for accession of the occupied Azerbaijani territories to Armenia must be considered as irresponsibility and disregard for the international community and, in particular, for OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, who are responsible for the settlement of the conflict via negotiations. Armenia crushes and insults the international norms and principles, the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and completely destroys the negotiation process on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Afterwards, the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group must answer the question regarding the future of the negotiation process.

Azerbaijan is calling on international community to strongly condemn this act.

Nagorno-Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Nagorno-Karabakh is a historical land and integral part of Azerbaijan whose territorial integrity and sovereignty within internationally recognized borders, including Nagorno-Karabakh, is recognized and fully supported by the international community. The people and state of Azerbaijan will never reconcile themselves with the violation of the territorial integrity as a result of the occupation and bloody ethnic cleansing committed by Armenia, and will not allow attempts to unite Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia or set up the second Armenian state on its territories.....let alone that the current state was established on historical Azerbaijani lands..

By making this statement, the Armenian PM refutes his own words, and recognizes that his recent statements that he 'cannot speak on behalf of Nagorno-Karabakh' are nothing but nonsense and lies. Thus, the Armenian leadership openly confirms that its participation in the negotiations has been nothing but hypocrisy, misleading the international community.

We would like to assure that the attempts of adding the occupied Azerbaijani territories to Armenia are a mere fantasy and these attempts are utopian. Armenia bears the sole responsibility for the current situation. Let no one doubt that Azerbaijan will reinstate the territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally

recognized borders and ensure the return of its displaced citizens, who were subjected to ethnic cleansing, to their native lands, as well as supremacy of international law.

Thank you for your attention.