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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan
at the General Debate of the 74th session of the
United Nations General Assembly**

New York, 28 September 2019

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish him every success in his important duties. Mr. Muhammad-Bande may count on full support of the Republic of Azerbaijan during his tenure. We are also grateful to H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her tremendous work in presiding over the Assembly during the seventy-third session.

We are also grateful to the United Nations Secretary-General H.E. Mr. António Guterres for his efforts towards reforming the Organization and making it more integrated, effective and efficient.

Mr. President,

The threats and challenges facing the world today demand our joint efforts to strengthen the international legal order and to rekindle faith in multilateralism and confidence in the United Nations.

Preserving the values of multilateralism and international cooperation, which underpin the United Nations Charter, is fundamental to promote and support the three pillars of the Organization, namely, peace and security, development and human rights. It is our common duty, therefore, to promote and support a reformed, reinvigorated and strengthened multilateral system.

The objective of ensuring a peaceful, just and prosperous world is hardly achievable if the universally accepted fundamental values, norms and principles are disregarded so as to whitewash aggressions and other illegal actions.

The implementation of resolutions adopted by the principal organs of the United Nations – the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as accountability, acquires significant importance in that connection. Apparent disregard of Security Council resolutions containing binding demands cannot constitute an accepted practice in the Council's discharging of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The United Nations, which was established to prevent war and human suffering by binding all its Members through a common rule-based order, plays a central role in ensuring that all involved in addressing peace and security concerns uphold the uniform application of the purposes and principles of the Organization. Support for that role of the United Nations is crucial in maintaining peace, stability and sustainable development.

Mr. President,

One of the strongest advocates of multilateralism in the contemporary international relations system is the Non-Aligned Movement. We look forward to hosting the next Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, which will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 25-26 October 2019.

Throughout its history the Non-Alignment Movement has played a fundamental role in strengthening international peace and security by promoting adherence to the Bandung Principles. The chairmanship of Azerbaijan will provide another impetus for advancing the founding principles of the Movement, the 65th anniversary of which will be celebrated in 2020.

Mr. President,

As we continue our path of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need to regularly test ourselves to identify the extent to which we are delivering on our commitments. Sustainable efforts backed by adequate resources are essential to secure bright future for our people and ensure that no one is left behind. Yesterday, Azerbaijan became a member of the Group of 77 and stands ready to actively contribute to its work on ensuring sustainable development through the promotion of economic cooperation.

Azerbaijan has maintained its sustainable economic growth and continued its consistent efforts to improve the living standards of our citizens.

Through successful implementation of economic development programs, over the last 15 years, Azerbaijan's economy has developed at a record pace on a global scale with an increase of Gross Domestic Product by 3.3 times. During the same period, industrial production has grown by 2.6 times, exports by 4.7 times and foreign exchange reserves by 24 times amounting up to \$45 billion.

Social sphere has always been in the spotlight. This year the Government adopted a social package that covers more than 4 million people out of 10 million populated country. Investments in social sphere over the last 15 years resulted in the poverty rate in the country to be reduced

from 49% in 2004 to less than 5% in 2019. Over the same period, the unemployment rate has dropped from 10.6% to less than 5%.

The 2019 World Bank's Doing Business report lists Azerbaijan in the top 10 most reforming countries in the world. Favorable business climate in the country brought about \$250 billion investment to the Azerbaijani economy over the last 15 years, half of which attributed to foreign investments.

Azerbaijan contributes to regional development efforts through promoting connectivity, bringing together continents and creating a platform for mutually beneficial cooperation. Despite being a landlocked country, Azerbaijan has transformed into an important international transportation hub.

Azerbaijan attaches particular importance to the promotion of cultural diversity. All ethnic and religious groups live in Azerbaijan in peace and harmony. In recent years we have hosted several major global events and launched a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening dialogue and mutual understanding. Among such initiatives is the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, which has been recognized by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General as a key global platform for promoting intercultural dialogue.

Having one of the youngest age distributions among the European countries, the Government places special emphasis to the full realization of the future generation's potential by offering them quality education and decent job opportunities. A new employment strategy of Azerbaijan for 2019-2030 has set 13 targets for 2030. These targets aim to reduce the unemployment among young people, improve vocational education and training, and increase employment in Small and Medium Enterprises.

Azerbaijan continues to strive in ensuring gender equality and empowering women in public and social life. I am pleased to announce that we are currently developing national action plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

As an emerging donor country, Azerbaijan continues to render international humanitarian and development assistance to a number of countries through the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Azerbaijan International Development Agency. Particular attention is being paid to addressing the needs of the developing and least developed countries.

The existential threat of climate change is becoming more real with every hurricane, wildfire and centimeter of sea-level rise. Azerbaijan is highly sensitive to the effects of climate change and is already facing its negative impact, such as floods, droughts, heat stresses and others.

Azerbaijan is a party to major international agreements on climate action, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. The national policies and strategies have been adapted to be in line with those international instruments. The Government has taken important steps to bring carbon dioxide emissions to a minimum and has pledged to reduce it by 35 percent by 2030.

Mr. President,

It is well-known that aggression by the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan has resulted in the occupation of almost one fifth of the territory of my country and expulsion of more than one million Azerbaijanis from their homes and properties. The unresolved conflict continues to undermine international and regional peace and security. It is very unfortunate that since the last year's General Debate, no progress has been achieved in the political settlement of the conflict.

Despite direct contacts between the leaders of the two countries and meetings of foreign ministers over the last two years, the apparent lack of genuine interest by the leadership of Armenia impedes the conflict resolution process. On the contrary, Yerevan, both in words and deeds, derails the process and sabotages the efforts for finding a soonest peaceful settlement. The recent statements by the Prime Minister of Armenia and the members of his Government leave no doubt as to their annexationist intentions, in clear disregard of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In his statements delivered recently, including at the General Debates at United Nations General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Armenia publicly disclosed his Government's strategy in negotiations, that is, to "defend the outcomes of the war". In fact, what the leadership of Armenia intends to defend is the unacceptable status-quo created through the unlawful use of force and the resulting occupation of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan, accompanied by heinous crimes against humanity, war crimes and acts of genocide committed against the Azerbaijani civilian population and total ethnic cleansing of the occupied territories of all non-Armenians.

In its unanimously adopted resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), the United Nations Security Council condemned the use of force against Azerbaijan, the occupation of its territories, the attacks on civilians and the bombardment of inhabited areas in my country, reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory.

In response to the territorial claims and forcible actions, the Security Council reconfirmed in its resolutions that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is an integral part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories.

The resolutions of the General Assembly and numerous decisions and documents adopted by other authoritative international organizations are framed along the same lines.

However, key Security Council demands remain unimplemented.

Instead, despite earlier warnings and condemnation by the international community and against the background of ongoing efforts towards the political settlement of the conflict, deliberate actions are being carried out in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan with a view to changing

their demographic, cultural and physical character. Such actions include, among others, implantation of settlers, destruction and appropriation of historical and cultural heritage, exploitation and pillage of and illicit trade in assets, natural resources and other wealth in the occupied territories. These actions constitute a clear violation of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Time of War and Additional Protocol I of 1977, amounting to war crimes and entailing State and individual criminal responsibility under international law.

It is abundantly clear that such policy and practices can in no way be reconciled with the objectives of achieving a peaceful resolution of the conflict, thus necessitating the urgent action by the United Nations and the wider international community for defending the values, norms and principles of the rules-based and civilized inter-State relations, as enshrined in the UN Charter.

The primary objective of the ongoing peace process is to eliminate the consequences of the war unleashed by Armenia, thereby ensuring the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders and the return of the forcibly displaced persons to their homes and properties. The achievement of that objective is a must, not compromise.

Azerbaijan remains committed to the earliest political settlement of the conflict. At the same time, the negotiations cannot last forever and imply continuation and sustenance of the situation created as a result of the unlawful use of force, occupation and ethnic cleansing. Nor can they prejudice the realization of the inherent right of self-defense under the UN Charter and international law.

Rather than wasting time on attempts to mislead the international community and its own people, Armenia must drop its lousy attempts to prolong the unsustainable status quo and faithfully comply with its international obligations. The earlier Yerevan realizes the lack of any prospect of its destructive political agenda, the sooner people of the region will be able to benefit from peace, stability and cooperation and the better will be the chances for Armenia to overcome serious political, economic and social burden it is facing due to its aggressive and hostile policy in the region.

Thank you.