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**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the exercise of the right of reply to the statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia in the exercise of the right of reply at the General Debate of the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly**

***26 September 2022***

The delegation of Armenia once again attempted to advance false narratives, while simultaneously ignoring and denying their country's own decades-long violations of international law and apparently disregarding the ongoing diplomatic efforts towards the normalization of relations between our States.

Armenia's hackneyed fabrications, distortions and deceptions are part of its disinformation campaign directed at the international community as a whole.

Indeed, it would be unrealistic to expect different rhetoric from Armenia, whose leaders, without any remorse, invented the outrageous concept of "ethnic incompatibility" of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, unleashed aggression against my country and ordered the killings of thousands of Azerbaijani civilians, total ethnic cleansing of the seized territories, destruction of hundreds of cities, towns and villages and desecration of numerous cultural heritage sites.

In a similar vein, what can be the weight of Armenia's statements in the United Nations whose resolutions it simply refused to implement?

Immediately after the end of the conflict in November 2020, it was Azerbaijan who initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations with Armenia and pushed for concrete results on three specific tracks forming the agenda of bilateral discussions, namely, the delimitation and demarcation of the State border; the soonest conclusion of a peace treaty based on five basic principles; and the opening of transport communications in the region, as provided in the trilateral statements of 2020 and 2021.

However, during this period, despite the strong support from the international community to this initiative and the efforts made to move the normalization agenda forward, Armenia has done everything possible, in words and deeds, to obstruct the process and backtrack from the implementation of the reached agreements. The revanchist objectives behind Armenia's destructive position are evident.

The danger associated with this position manifested in a serious border escalation recklessly provoked by Armenia earlier this month. This escalation was not an isolated episode, but another link in the chain of destabilizing actions by Armenia over the past months.

Azerbaijan took adequate and proportionate countermeasures to neutralize the threat against its sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensure the safety of its military personnel and civilians. These measures were limited and targeted at legitimate military objects.

In the past, we have repeatedly witnessed Armenia's attempts to portray its own thoughts, perceptions and phraseology as allegedly reflecting the position of the international community. The comments by Armenia about the meeting of the Security Council on 15 September are yet another product of this country's factory of falsifications. In short, the Security Council didn't say what Armenian officials try to put into its mouth.

Appeals by Armenia to international law are equally fallacious, given that it continues to violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

Thus, Armenia's territorial claims are set in its national legislation. Furthermore, Armenia refuses to fully withdraw the remnants of its armed forces and illegal armed bands from the territory of Azerbaijan and return to Azerbaijan eight enclave border villages, which remain under its occupation since the early 1990s.

That Armenia is yet to comply with its international obligations and engage genuinely in efforts towards consolidating peace and stability in the region is evidenced also by its continued use of old or fake names for the localities in Azerbaijan. The references by Armenia to such names, which have neither historical nor legal grounds whatsoever, are testament to Armenia's apparent disregard for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country.

It is exactly for the purpose of sustaining and advancing its territorial claims and revanchist objectives, Armenia stubbornly asserts that the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" has not been resolved and that there is a need for its comprehensive settlement.

Armenia had thirty years to put an end to its aggression and occupation through negotiations. However, in a hope for endless impunity, Armenia preferred to direct all its efforts at the colonization and annexation of the occupied Azerbaijani territories under the cover of the peace process and the ceasefire, in blatant violation of international law and the resolutions of the Security Council. This policy of Armenia failed once and for all, and there is no and will not be a return to the past.

I have to emphasize that Armenia has neither legal, nor political or moral grounds to make any statements concerning the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan or the matters falling within my country's exclusive sovereign rights, competence and responsibilities.

Armenia's allegations that Azerbaijan is impeding access by United Nations humanitarian agencies and UNESCO to the formerly occupied territories are false. This is actually what Armenia is striving for by politicizing the issue and interfering in the functions of international organizations, while passing over in silence the blocking of their visits to these territories when they were under its occupation.

Azerbaijan has hosted and continues to welcome site visits from international organizations that are conducted in an independent and impartial manner. Azerbaijan is fully committed to transparency to allow the international community to bear witness, for the first time in thirty years, what has happened in the territories formerly occupied by Armenia.

Further, we resolutely reject Armenia's allegations about so-called anti-Armenian hatred. The purpose of such allegations is evidently to distract attention from its own long-standing, deeply rooted and structural racist policy.

Even after the end of the conflict, Armenia continues to allow racist hate groups formed for the specific purpose of inciting and committing violence against Azerbaijanis to operate openly and notoriously on its territory, in violation of international law and apparent disregard for the order on provisional measures adopted by the International Court of Justice on 7 December 2021 in the case on the *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Azerbaijan v. Armenia)*.

Another false assertion is that Azerbaijan holds Armenian prisoners of war. Azerbaijan returned all detainees to Armenia under the terms of the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020.

While projecting itself as a proponent of human rights and democracy, Armenia continues, without any hesitation, to deny its responsibility for numerous war crimes committed by its forces, agents, officials and other persons under its direction and control and refuses to prosecute and punish the perpetrators and to offer an appropriate remedy or redress for its breaches. It is outrageous that a country in which international terrorists and war criminals are national heroes considers itself democratic.

Instead of attempting to distort reality, mislead the international community, misinterpret international documents and incite enmity and hatred, Armenia must first and foremost abandon hostile narratives, cease and desist from disseminating, promoting or sponsoring hate propaganda, prosecute and punish numerous war crimes for which it is responsible, redress the harm caused to Azerbaijan and its people, commit to the normalization of inter-State relations based on international law, comply faithfully with international obligations and support the efforts aimed at building, strengthening and sustaining peace and stability in the region.