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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Yashar Aliyev
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations
at the Security Council open debate on the theme “Investment in people to enhance
resilience against complex challenges”, in connection with the under the agenda item
“Peacebuilding and sustaining peace”**

26 January 2023

Mr. President,

As the concept note for this debate pertinently recalls, the notion of peacebuilding was first put on table in a report on “An Agenda for peace”, submitted by the then Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in response to the request from the Security Council.

Many provisions of that report are highly relevant today, including for finding answers to the questions as to how the Security Council can better address the emerging threats and what elements should be included in “A new agenda for peace”.

Most importantly, the foundation-stone of any efforts in the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace is and must remain the State. Respect for its fundamental sovereignty and integrity is crucial to any progress in preventing conflicts, restoring and maintaining peace, building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations, enhancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, protecting human security and promoting sustainable economic and social development.

Although each war, conflict or dispute is unique, the principles guiding inter-State relations and cooperation are universal. “An Agenda for peace” was very clear in rejecting fragmentation and stating that the principles of the United Nations Charter must be applied consistently, not selectively.

Mr. President,

By the time “An Agenda for peace” was adopted and the concept of peacebuilding launched, Azerbaijan had already been facing armed aggression by neighbouring Armenia. Neither the landmark messages delivered through the mentioned report of the Secretary-General, nor the subsequent resolutions of the Security Council (822, 853, 874 and 884) prevented the aggressor from further attacks, mass atrocities and territorial seizures.

In 1994, Boutros-Ghali declared the position of the United Nations based on four principles, namely, the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan; the inviolability of international boundaries; the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory; and the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (SG/SM/5460, 30 October 1994).

Armenia ignored this position and kept the territories of my country under occupation until they were liberated by military and political means at the end of 2020.

Evidently, while committing aggression, torturing and killing thousands of civilians, subjecting the occupied territories to total ethnic cleansing, cultural erasure, looting and destruction, Armenia cared little about the principles of inter-State relations, human rights and the decisions and reports of international organizations.

The question now is whether Armenia has changed its policy 30 years later. Definitely not. Following the end of the conflict, instead of genuinely and faithfully engaging in the process of normalizing inter-State relations based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as has been proposed and consistently advanced by Azerbaijan and supported by the international community, Armenia gave preference to usual evasions and destabilizing actions.

Territorial claims motivated by fabricated historical narratives and ethno-nationalist ideology are still the dominating imperatives for the authorities in İrəvan.

Armenia's refusal to completely withdraw its armed forces and illegal armed formations from the territory of my country and return eight occupied border villages to Azerbaijan, and its continued mine terrorism and other illegal activities, references to the localities in Azerbaijan with outdated or fake names, widespread smear and misinformation campaign and failure to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred by ethno-nationalist groups operating within its territory are in no way consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, international law, human rights and the peace agenda.

Moreover, for almost 30 years of war and occupation, Armenia refused to account for thousands of missing Azerbaijanis and to conduct investigations into numerous atrocity crimes committed by its armed forces during the conflict. Only in 2022, Armenia handed over to Azerbaijan 67 bags containing mixed remains belonging to 106 persons. It cannot but cause deep indignation that a country that claims to be nothing less than a center of civilization and an ardent advocate of human rights has kept these remains for three decades, contrary to all moral canons and in violation of international humanitarian law.

Mr. President,

Azerbaijan's experience is an illustration and reminder of the need to do much more to prevent and resolve conflicts, ensure respect for the sovereignty and integrity of States, confront hatred and disinformation and build and sustain peace.

Providing support to States affected by conflict and engaged in post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, rehabilitation and reintegration is and must remain a critical commitment of the entire United Nations system. Such support is indispensable also in the context of investment in people to enhance resilience against contemporary threats and challenges.

Azerbaijan is firm in its determination to defend its security, sovereignty and territorial integrity, protect its people and ensure peace and stability in the region by all available means, in full conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Thank you.