



**THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
TO THE UNITED NATION**

633 Third Avenue, Suite 3210, New York, NY, 10017
Tel: (212) 371-2559, 371-2832 (ext. 101); Fax: (212) 371-2784, (646) 738-6143

**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 children and armed conflict**

31 October 2017

Madam President,

At the outset, I would like to commend the French presidency for holding this important open debate and for submitting a concept note (S/2017/892) on the topic. We also take note of the latest report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/72/361-S/2017/821), which covers the period from January to December 2016, and thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative Virginia Gamba and other briefers for their statements.

Azerbaijan is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. My Government has strongly and consistently supported international efforts aimed at ensuring more effective protection for the rights of children and improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict. We welcome the progress made in preventing and responding to grave violations committed against children.

However, serious challenges remain and children continue to suffer in situations of armed conflict. The increasing brutality and the changing nature of warfare give rise to a need for greater measures for protection. Although most of the violations and abuses against children in situations of armed conflict are committed by non-State armed groups, the wrongs of the recent past and targeting civilians in ongoing inter-State conflicts must not be neglected.

In the course of the continuing aggression by Armenia against my country serious violations of international humanitarian law amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide were committed. A “scorched earth policy” implemented by the Armenian side involved ethnic cleansing of the seized territories of all Azerbaijanis and the brutal killing or wounding of thousands of civilians, including children.

Azerbaijan continues to suffer from one of the highest number of refugees and displaced persons in the world, many of whom are children. As the Secretary-General rightly observes in his report, the unprecedented number of refugee children and internally displaced children is not the result of conflict alone, but of the brutality with which parties conduct hostilities, including by directly targeting children.

As of 1 October 2017, 3,874 citizens of Azerbaijan were registered as missing as a result of the conflict. Among them are 744 civilians, 66 of whom are children (22 girls and 44 boys). Of them, 29 children (7 girls and 22 boys) were taken as hostages before they went missing. Armenia refuses to cooperate in order to determine the fate of missing persons.

The impunity still enjoyed by the perpetrators of the crimes committed in the course of the Armenian aggression not only impedes progress in achieving the long-awaited peace and reconciliation, but also aggravates the situation on the ground.

Despite the formal ceasefire, direct and deliberate attacks of the Armenian armed forces against the civilians and the civilian objects in Azerbaijan situated along or further behind the frontlines continue to date and have become even more frequent and more violent in recent times.

Thus, the assessment report the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that was released following its mission to the affected areas of Azerbaijan in May 2016, inter alia, made it abundantly clear that due to the use of new and heavier types of military hardware and the intense fighting during the escalation earlier in April 2016 many schools were damaged and closed in the area near the frontline in the Goranboy, Tartar, Aghdam and Aghjebedi districts of Azerbaijan.

Under international law, intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to education is a war crime. It should also be noted that attacks on schools and hospitals constitute one of the grave violations that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict is mandated to monitor and report on.

Among the victims of the recent ceasefire violations committed by the armed forces of Armenia are:

- a 2-year-old resident of the Fizuli district of Azerbaijan, Zahra Guliyeva, who was killed alongside her grandmother on 4 July 2017, while another woman was seriously wounded, as a result of intensive fire with 82-and 120-mm mortars and heavy grenade launchers;
- and a 13-year-old resident of the Tovuz district of Azerbaijan, Ramin Yusifov, who received multiple shrapnel wounds as a result of a heavy shelling of his village on 7 August 2017.

The vulnerability of children in wartime requires both targeted and comprehensive protection efforts worldwide, which must be free of selectivity and must address all situations of armed conflict without distinction, including those of a protracted nature and prolonged impact on children, in particular.

We concur with the Secretary-General that the enhanced protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law are needed, and that impunity must end in order to break the cycles of violence and to aid prevention efforts.

Thank you.