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Agenda items 15, 34, 35, 40, 64, 70, 72, 86 and 135

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and related intolerance****Promotion and protection of human rights****The rule of law at the national and international levels****The responsibility to protect and the prevention of
genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes
against humanity****Security Council
Seventy-sixth year****Letter dated 20 April 2021 from the Permanent Representative of
Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 18 April 2021 on the occasion of the International Day for Monuments and Sites (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 15, 34, 35, 40, 64, 70, 72, 86 and 135, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 20 April 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 18 April – International Day for Monuments and Sites

18 April 2021

Today is celebrated as the International Day for Monuments and Sites.

On this occasion, Azerbaijan reiterates its grave concern regarding the destruction of its cultural heritage by Armenia in the liberated territories.

Almost all historical, cultural and religious monuments were completely destroyed during the period of occupation. As of today, the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan has identified more than 400 monuments that have been destroyed in the liberated territories. The total number of the monuments in these territories is up to 3000. Cultural and religious property belonging to Azerbaijan has been looted, desecrated, altered and illegally exported to Armenia. 22 museums and museum branches with over 100,000 artefacts in the liberated territories have been destroyed.

Artefacts and ancient manuscripts of the 13th century Khudavang monastery situated in the Kalbajar district, as well as precious artefacts found during illegal archaeological excavations near the Shahbulag fortress of the Aghdam district were illegally transported to Armenia. Besides, illegal excavations have been conducted in the Azikh cave in the Azikh village of the Khojavand district.

All of these actions constitute a gross violation of international humanitarian law, including the UNESCO standard setting instruments, such as the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property on the Event of Armed Conflict and its two protocols, as well as the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

Regretfully, our appeals to the relevant international organizations to investigate war crimes, including the deliberate destruction, misappropriation and alteration of our cultural heritage, as well as illicit removal of our cultural properties by Armenia have been ignored throughout the 30 years of occupation. We welcome the interest now being shown in this respect.

The cultural heritage situated in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, regardless of its origin, whether secular or religious, reflects the cultural diversity of the people of Azerbaijan, which Azerbaijan values and protects.

It is a priority for the Government of Azerbaijan to ensure the full assessment by an independent technical mission of unprecedented damage inflicted on Azerbaijani cultural heritage, and Azerbaijan is closely cooperating with UNESCO in this regard.