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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 “Strengthening accountability and justice
for serious violations of international law”, in connection with the agenda item “Maintenance
of international peace and security”**

2 June 2022

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Albanian presidency for having convened this important meeting.

As far as general international law is concerned, as laid down in the Articles on State Responsibility adopted by the International Law Commission on 9 August 2001, “[e]very internationally wrongful act of a State entails the international responsibility of that State”.

Under international criminal law, all those who engage in conduct considered to be prohibited and criminalized bear individual criminal liability. States are required to investigate, without undue delay, reports of war crimes and other serious offences and to prosecute and punish the perpetrators.

Despite clear obligations adopted in international law, the lack of accountability continues to challenge peace and justice and to prevent progress in sustainable development.

First and foremost, selectivity and double standards should have no place in issues relating to the universally recognized norms and principles of international law, the principles of accountability and the identification of the perpetrators of international crimes.

Combating impunity for serious violations and broader transitional justice are imperative and must be systematic and universal.

It is critical to consistently and resolutely oppose and reject any attempts and actions aimed at imposing the culture of impunity for serious violations, misinterpreting international law, promoting territorial claims and undermining the unity and territorial integrity of States.

Azerbaijan's experience of thirty-year unlawful occupation of its territories by Armenia since the early 1990s, accompanied by numerous war crimes committed against our people, complete leveling of thousands of our cities, towns and villages, barbaric destruction of our cultural heritage and forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of our citizens is a graphic illustration of the deficiency of accountability mechanisms.

The condemnations and binding demands contained in unanimously adopted Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) were simply ignored by Armenia, while the OSCE-led mediation failed to facilitate a negotiated settlement. On the contrary, over this period, Armenia spared no effort to consolidate and cement the results of the aggression and colonize the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, thus abusing the peace process and the ceasefire, in clear violation of international law.

Another act of aggression by Armenia in the fall of 2020 became a logical consequence of its decades-long impunity. Direct and indiscriminate missile attacks that struck Azerbaijani cities and districts, including with the use of internationally banned cluster bombs, killed and wounded hundreds of civilians and destroyed numerous civilian objects.

Azerbaijan resolutely responded to liberate the occupied territories, restore its territorial integrity and protect its people, acting exclusively on its sovereign soil, in full conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The thirty-year armed conflict has been resolved. This was a long overdue development demanded by the Charter of the United Nations, international law and justice.

Further to restore justice, Azerbaijan instituted proceedings to hold Armenia to account for its past and ongoing egregious violations of international law, including within the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights. Additionally, several individuals were prosecuted and punished for war crimes and terrorist and mercenary activities.

At the same time, Azerbaijan initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations with Armenia based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders. We look forward to the soon commencement of negotiations on a bilateral peace treaty and tangible progress in this direction within a reasonable time-frame, along with the early reopening of transport routes and the delimitation and demarcation of the State border between the two countries.

Strict compliance by States with their international obligations is vital for preserving, building and sustaining peace and enhancing cooperation. Azerbaijan is determined to strengthen security and stability, promote accountability and advance the agenda of peacebuilding, reconciliation, reintegration, peaceful coexistence and development in the region.

Thank you.