

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Allow me, on behalf of the Azerbaijani delegation, to greet you.

The legislatures of the countries we represent play a progressive role in the establishment of peace and justice, as noted in the topic we are discussing, in terms of the close links they have with the civil society, state institutions and population. The parliamentary institution has an undeniable potential for achieving the peace and the dialogue between the nations, countries and regions, different civilizations and cultures.

First let me say that, we are pleased to see that our Armenian colleagues finally started talking about some principles of international law, recalling that Armenia has been refusing even a slight hint to territorial integrity for decades. I also want to remind my Armenian colleague that there is no administrative unit called 'Nagorno Karabakh' in Azerbaijan. That territory is called Garabagh Economic Zone of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Armenia has no moral right to talk about international law. Its allegations on so-called ethnic cleansing and occupation are ridiculous. Azerbaijan is a multicultural country and ethnic Armenians from Garabagh region are welcome to be part of this multicultural model. It is Armenia and its illegal separatist regime that pushed local Armenian residents to move. Armenia has for decades promoted the idea of impossibility of co-existing with Azerbaijan at the state level, which led to this situation.

For about 30 years, 20% of the territory of Azerbaijan was under the occupation of Armenia. Although the UN Security Council adopted 4 resolutions in 1993 requiring the Armenian armed forces to leave Azerbaijani settlements, these documents remained unimplemented for 27 years.

In 2020, Azerbaijan restored its territorial integrity with its own efforts. However, for 3 years, after the end of the war, Armenia continued to maintain its military contingent on the territory of Azerbaijan and supplied it with weapons. Despite the decades long occupation, it was that Azerbaijan proposed a peace agreement to Armenia to normalize relations between the two states based on well-known principles of international law.

Unfortunately, this humane step taken by Azerbaijan remained without any answer, and the final peace agreement has not yet been signed.

Over the past 3 years, Azerbaijani Government has taken practical steps to reintegrate the local Armenian population into Azerbaijani society. The President of the country appointed a member of the Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Majlis) as a special representative to conduct negotiations with the representatives of Armenian residents living in Karabakh. Milli Majlis, using the capabilities of parliamentary diplomacy, actively participates in the implementation of the existing initiatives related to the establishment of regional peace as a whole.

The continuing regular military provocations forced Azerbaijan to conduct local anti-terrorist measures on 19-20 September this year. As a result of these actions, which lasted only for 23 hours, aimed solely at neutralizing the military infrastructure, the illegal military groups were neutralized and disarmed.

The President of Azerbaijan guaranteed social security, economic, religious, educational, and municipal freedoms to the local Armenian population. A portal for applications has been created to formalize the process of reintegration of Armenians. Despite this, the local Armenian population decided to move from the territory of Azerbaijan. Their relocation took place completely voluntarily, freely, accompanied by media representatives. During the resettlement, they received the necessary assistance from Azerbaijani law enforcement agencies and medical personnel. People were provided with water and food, and they themselves confirmed this when they found themselves on the territory of Armenia. No violent methods of pressure were recorded on them. This was confirmed in a statement made by the representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Armenia, Kavita Belani. In addition, two UN missions visited the region on October 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. Mission's officials said there was no damage caused to civilian infrastructure, hospitals, schools, religious or public facilities in the area.

Today, the Azerbaijani state is interested in signing a final peace agreement with Armenia to forget 30 years of hostility and achieve a sustainable peace. This can serve as a solid basis for lasting peace in the South Caucasus. There is no other alternative to peace.