



Hügelgasse 2, A-1130, Wien | Tel.: + 43 (1) 403 13 22 | Fax: + 43 (1) 403 13 23 | E-mail: vienna@mission.mfa.gov.az

**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1135th Meeting of the Permanent Council,
02 March 2017**

*in response to H.E. Mr. Volker Türk,
UN Assistant High Commissioner on Refugees*

Mr. Chairperson,

Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan warmly welcomes H.E. Mr. Volker Türk, Assistant UNHCR to the Permanent Council and thanks him for comprehensive statement.

Azerbaijan enjoys excellent cooperation with the Office of the UNHCR. We highly value its role in tackling serious challenges stemming from ongoing large-scale displacement. Due to the ongoing conflict with Armenia, close to one million Azerbaijanis continue to be displaced. Since the first days of restoration of its independence, the Government of Azerbaijan has spent significant resources towards alleviation of sufferings of this vulnerable group. The Great Return Programme worked out by the Government envisages series of measures to facilitate safe and dignified return of displaced persons. We have already started its practical implementation in the Jojug Marjanli village of the occupied Jabrayil district and look forward to possible contribution by the UNHCR to that end.

The Government tries to find solutions to numerous social problems of displaced persons and provide their normal living conditions locally. In the meantime, the only sustainable solution is to ensure their right for safe and dignified return into places of origin in accordance with existing international standards. To that end, coordinated efforts are needed by the international community to address the root causes of displacement, most notably crisis and armed conflicts.

We share your assessment that the numbers of refugees and IDPs in our region point to importance of implementing peace agreements. The New York Declaration adopted by consensus last year envisages the determination of all signatories to address the root causes of large movements of people. This includes prevention of crisis situations and settlement of conflicts. It is within this context that we see great potential for cooperation between the UNHCR and the OSCE. We take positive note of UNHCR's readiness to play a part in the humanitarian aspect of conflict resolution processes led by the OSCE.

At the same time, lack of solution to conflicts cannot be used as a pretext for blocking addressing numerous challenges stemming from large-scale displacement. The statistics are clear enough to demonstrate that internally displaced persons account for significant portion of people on move. Regretfully, due to opposition of one single participating State last year in Hamburg we could not address the issue of large movement of people in all its dimensions.

Nevertheless, it remains to be the view of overwhelming majority of the participating States that problem of internal displacement needs to be addressed in a comprehensive way. In this regard, we highly appreciate the work of the IWG under able leadership of Ambassador Claude Wild. We hope that necessary steps will be taken by the OSCE Chairmanship and institutions to that end. We encourage the UNHCR to provide its valuable contribution to discussions of this important issue within the OSCE.

The ongoing crisis in the neighborhood of the OSCE adds new wave of displaced persons to already large numbers of refugees and IDPs inside the region. It created significant challenges for countries of transit and destination, especially for immediate neighbors of Syria, such as Turkey. Their efforts to tackle this humanitarian crisis are commendable and should be supported by all in a spirit of solidarity and burden-sharing. We see particular role of the UNHCR in promoting humane and comprehensive approaches to the crisis.

The problem should be dealt exclusively in accordance with international humanitarian law. It is within this context that we underline the necessity of taking adequate measures to prevent illegal resettlement of refugees from Syria in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, which has been widely documented by numerous international independent observers. This must be prevented and reversed, as it runs contrary to the humanitarian law and aggravates situation in Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict zone. We encourage the UNHCR to closely look into the matter.

As for the comments by the representative of Armenia, I would like to stress that Armenia's speculations about the rights of the residents in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan is nothing but another futile effort to cover up its annexationist policy and attests to the direct role of Armenia in unlawful occupation of territories of Azerbaijan.

None of the OSCE commitments on human rights protection constitute preferential treatment for any State, group or person, or may be interpreted as implying any right to engage in any activity or perform any action in contravention of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, other obligations of international law or the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, including the principle of territorial integrity of States.

Armenia cannot demand privileges at the very core of which are gross and systematic violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, and the discriminatory denial of fundamental rights and freedoms with respect to others, in particular the significantly larger Azerbaijani population that was expelled from the occupied territories as a result of Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan.

In conclusion, we once again thank Mr. Türk for his presence at the Council and wish him every success in his future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.