

**Ukraine's Quest for Mature Nation Statehood/Rountable IX:  
"Ukraine's Regional Commitments"**

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**Presentation by H.E. Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, Permanent  
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*Mini Forum I: "Addressing the protracted conflicts:  
Basic principles of their resolution"*

Mr. Chairman,

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to participate at this round table discussion, which indeed offers a timely opportunity for the academic and professional communities to engage in thought-provoking deliberations and share ideas and knowledge. I would like to express my gratitude to the hosts for invitation to take part at this event and address specifically some issues relating to our vision of prospects, ways and means for establishing regional peace, security and stability.

It is obvious that the challenges to the security in the region emanate predominantly from the relevant circumstances and specific security environment, influenced, amongst others, by the geographical location in proximity to hotbeds of conflicts, availability of natural resources, as well as the geopolitical and geo-strategic situation within the major international crossroads.

At the same time, the major aggravating factor is the protracted armed conflicts in the region, which represent a permanent direct threat to security, independence and democratic development of the regional states, as well as the main source of instability in the whole region.

While examining generally the current processes taking place in the region and globally, it is necessary to recognize that we are experiencing a period of dramatic change, which in many instances undermines the basic elements of international legal order, threatens the integrity and stability of States.

The recent developments in Georgia illustrated yet another how dangerous is the stalemate in the resolution of the protracted conflicts, which undoubtedly should be of particular concern not only for the affected countries, but also for the international community at large.

It should be pointed out in this regard that all States are bound by the generally accepted norms and principles of international law, including in particular those related to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally-recognized borders of States.

Azerbaijan proceeds from the strong understanding that faithful observance of the generally accepted norms and principles of international law concerning friendly relations and cooperation among States and the fulfillment in good faith of the obligations assumed by States are of the greatest importance for the maintenance of international peace and

security. It is also clear that there can be no long-term and sustainable peace and stability without justice and respect for human dignity, rights and freedoms.

We are convinced that any steps which lead to undermining the very foundation of international law, which is based on respect for the territorial integrity of existing sovereign States, contribute to further escalation and destabilization with unpredictable consequences.

In this context, we should unite our efforts to unveil the lack of prospects and malignancy of separatism and disintegration and speak in one voice against the use of force and the practice of ethnic cleansing and territorial seizures, which are incompatible with the principles and ideals of peace, democracy, stability and regional cooperation.

Despite obvious differences between the conflicts in the GUAM area, they have almost the same origin, similarly developed scenario, dangerous consequences and geopolitical constituent. The conflicts started from the manifestation of aggressive separatism and were aimed from the very beginning at seizing the territories by using force. In some instances they were accompanied with fundamental change of the demographic composition of the population in the conflict-affected areas and the most serious international crimes, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

No wonder that the GUAM Member states elaborated the joint position on the conflict settlement issue, which is based on respect for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova, return of forcibly displaced persons to their homes, providing normal, secure, and equal conditions of life for all communities of the conflict-affected territories, which would allow to build up an effective democratic systems of self-governance therein within the internationally recognized borders of the respective GUAM States.

We proceed from the strong believe that the only way for reaching a just and comprehensive settlement of the conflicts on the territories of the GUAM States is an approach based on the full and unequivocal respect for the letter and spirit of international law.

It would be reasonable to remind that international law does not remain neutral when its peremptory norms are breached. Thus, in case of using force for the acquisition of territory and committing serious international crimes, the international community is under the obligation not to recognize the consequences of such behavior, nor render aid or assistance to maintain the illegal situation. To hold otherwise would be tantamount to accepting the consequences of ethnic cleansing and other serious breaches of the rule of law and human rights, or, in other words, prevalence of force over justice.

The ambiguous reaction of the international community while addressing the regional crises and conflicts only serves to generating

mutual suspicion and mistrust, as well as to reinforcing the perceptions of notorious double standards and centrality of military strength in international relations.

To conclude, let me stress that ensuring security and stability of the region is only possible when through joint efforts we will be able in a committed manner to achieve the resolution of the outstanding conflicts. Only in such a way we may be able to start a new page in the history of the region.

I am confident that that the tangible results of this round-table will be a source of inspiration for all of us in our efforts to find creative solutions to the problems we are facing.

Thank you.