



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF

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Statement

by

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of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

at

the General Debate of the 61st Session
of the General Assembly
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Madam President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you upon the election to the post of the President of the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly and wish you every success in your tenure.

I would like also to extend my sincere thanks to your predecessor my good friend Mr. Jan Eliasson, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, for his efforts and active work with the Delegations throughout the last session.

Excellencies,

The 2005 High Level Plenary Meeting of the Assembly became an important milestone in the history of the United Nations. It reaffirmed our faith in the Organization and unwavering interest to make it stronger and effective.

I am pleased to emphasize the positive move that we have made since last September on issues such as development, environment, HIV/AIDS, Secretariat reform, establishment of Central Emergency Response Fund and Peacebuilding Fund. Founding of the Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council are remarkable moments in the history of the United Nations. Yet more remains to be done to realize our common vision of solidarity and collective security, which premises on the shared values and principles of the Charter.

As we move toward such ambitious goal it is increasingly apparent that multilateralism with a strong United Nations at its core remains the only reliable instrument for maintaining international peace and security, achieving sustainable development and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Strengthening the deliberative and decision-making authority of the General Assembly, which represents views of all Member States, is a key to the successful implementation and effectiveness of the reforms.

Azerbaijan believes that reform of the Security Council should not be confined to enlargement of its membership. We stand for rationalization of the Council's working methods, greater transparency in decision-making, accountability in performance and full implementation of its resolutions.

Election of the new Secretary-General is an utmost important event for the Organization. It has already revealed a number of deficiencies and requires more transparency and inclusiveness of the wider membership. Azerbaijan believes that the new head of the United Nations should clearly recognize the trends and challenges faced by the international community in the beginning of XXI century.

Madam President,

Azerbaijan regrets that the late response of the Security Council to the evolving crisis in the Middle East allowed the humanitarian tragedy to unfold. In this regard, implementation of the measures contained in the Security Council resolution 1701, including those related to the Lebanese Government 7-point peace plan, is very important for bringing durable peace to the

Middle East. Azerbaijan will continue its efforts to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict and alleviate the sufferings of civilians in Lebanon.

I would like to express profound support to the states that fell victims to terrorist attacks. While strongly condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirming our commitment to jointly fight this global scourge, we register our serious concern over attempts to link terrorism with Islamic religion, culture or people.

There is a dire necessity to stop and reverse a growing tendency towards Islamophobia in the world. Azerbaijan, in the capacity of the Chairman of the Ministerial Council of the Organization of the Islamic Conference calls on Member States to undertake concrete measures to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among nations, cultures and religions by promoting tolerance and respect for freedom of religion and belief. It is of vital importance to raise public awareness about tenets and values of Islam worldwide, including in the Muslim societies. To this end, we plan to host in Baku in 2007 under the OIC aegis an international conference on the role of mass media in developing tolerance and mutual understanding.

Madam President,

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan recently has become a subject of urgent consideration by the General Assembly due to the massive fires registered in those territories. The Assembly adopted without a vote resolution stressing the necessity to conduct an urgent environmental operation with a view to suppressing the fires, overcoming their detrimental impact and rehabilitating the affected territories.

The resolution has a two-fold purpose. On one hand, it envisages a number of practical steps, including the assessment of the short- and long-term impact of the fires on the environment as a step in preparation for the environmental operation, counteraction to the environmental degradation of the region and rehabilitation of the fire-affected part of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. On the other, it serves as an unprecedented example for engaging parties to the conflict, Armenia and Azerbaijan, into a joint environmental operation to be carried out directly in the fire-affected zone. Implementation of the resolution will contribute into establishment of atmosphere of trust and confidence and will give positive impetus to the negotiation process.

Sadly, this is the only positive development so far, and cannot be attributed to the overall situation around the settlement process. Although no substantial progress has been witnessed so far, the parties and mediators accepted the stage-by-stage approach in the settlement process as the only possible option. Basically, there are two main issues on which parties disagree – definition of status of self-rule for the population of the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region and withdrawal of the Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

There are a common understanding that the status cannot be defined today. It should be elaborated through peaceful, democratic and legal process with direct participation and consent of both Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. To that end, the Armenian occupying forces have to withdraw from the occupied territories and necessary conditions have to be in place to allow secure and dignified return of the

indigenous Azerbaijani displaced persons to the Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding territories of Azerbaijan.

Such a logical chain of events will lay down necessary conditions for the next stage of the settlement which is normalizing life in the conflict-affected area, restoring inter-communal relations, launching social-economic development and considering appropriate models of self-rule for the entire population of the region within Azerbaijan.

Our position based on relevant resolutions of the Security Council and OSCE decisions, which unequivocally demand unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, creation of favorable conditions for safe return of civilian population and restoration of inter-communal relations and elaboration of the status of self-government within democratic and legal process based on the agreement of both communities of the region.

It is difficult to hope for a breakthrough in the negotiations when Armenia rejects face-to-face meetings and refuses to take a constructive approach to solve existing problems. What is more worrisome is that Armenia attempts to propagate by all means the separatist regime established under its control in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and to spread myths and legends about the historical past and alleged democratic and economic achievements of the regime. As a matter of fact, the reality on the ground proves the opposite. The Armenian community, which is the only remaining part of the entire population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, is increasingly inclined to leave the unrecognized quasi-entity due to the worsening living conditions and lack of any perspectives of economic and social development.

Dynamics of development of Azerbaijan is strikingly evident and in five or ten-year period economic growth of the entire region vis-a-vis Armenia will be much more substantial. Armenia could be given a chance to join the on-going regional and transnational projects, but prior to that Yerevan has to take a number of steps for establishing normal relations with its neighbors.

Madam President,

The first plenary meetings of the Assembly under your Presidency had been marked by an extremely difficult debate over the issue which was procedural in nature, but had a substantial political bearing. I join my colleagues from GUAM Member-States in commending your wisdom and efforts aimed at ensuring that rules of this House serve the interests of all Member States. Procedural disadvantages shall not constrain the Member States from bringing critical issues affecting their security to the attention of the Assembly.

The GUAM heads of state in their Joint Declaration on the issue of conflict settlement called upon States and international organizations to further facilitate, within their competence, the processes of settlement of conflicts in the GUAM area. Therefore, the inclusion of the new item on the conflicts in the GUAM area in the agenda of the General Assembly is an attempt to raise awareness of the Assembly about dangerous developments emerging from those unresolved conflicts.

Dear colleagues,

The pledges we made to promote better standards of life in larger freedom nourish the faith of people around the world in tomorrow's positive change and development. Hence, there is no greater imperative to timely accomplish development agenda and to strengthen global partnership for development.

Azerbaijan is convinced that national development strategies should be a principal framework of development cooperation and support. Efficiency in the implementation process cannot be achieved unless it employs measures targeted at increasing self-sufficiency of countries in the long run, *inter alia*, through knowledge, capacity building, infrastructure development, market access and ultimately at reducing their dependence on foreign aid. Favorable global economic situation remains a prerequisite for success of national development strategies, macroeconomic policies and eventually, for economic and financial stability and growth of countries.

Azerbaijan believes that international organizations should support the efforts of countries to improve and sustain their economic performance. We look forward to the contribution of UN with a stronger and more effective Economic and Social Council, capable to effectively discharge its newly assigned functions.

Let me now share Azerbaijan's perspective and experience in enhancing growth, development and welfare. Set on momentum of 2005, Azerbaijan's GDP growth has built up to 30.5% in 2006, driven by oil and gas production and exports. In 2006 the State spending has been increased by up to 65% and a large portion of it was spent on public sector and infrastructure. The Government's key challenge is to create favorable environment to attract investments into the non-oil sector and diversify the export potential of the country. To achieve this objective we keep the domestic reforms on track and strive to further strengthen business environment.

The year 2006 has marked a historic event for the region and beyond, which is the official inauguration of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) main oil export pipeline. Currently, we are looking forward to completion of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline this fall and remain committed to contribute to the global energy security. At the same time, we actively pursue development of trans-regional infrastructure projects, in particular the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad that has been recognized as an important part of East-West and North-South transportation corridor.

Last, but not least, establishment of the Human Rights Council marked a critical step towards enhancing the universal system of promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. The Council is equipped with the mandate necessary to give human rights central role foreseen by the Charter and its status has been elevated to subsidiary body of the General Assembly. We have to build up effective mechanisms such as universal periodic review, special procedures and complaint procedure within the Council.

As a newly elected member of the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan once again reiterates its readiness to cooperate with other Member States in order to ensure that the new Council becomes an effective body guided by the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity and basis its activity on constructive and transparent dialogue and cooperation.

Thank you.