



STATEMENT

by H.E. Mr. Vahe Gevorgyan,

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

at the General Debate of the 72nd Session of the Executive

Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

Geneva, 4 October 2021

Chairperson,

Distinguished High Commissioner,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a country directly affected by the forced displacement, Armenia has always strived to contribute positively to the UNHCR's efforts to alleviate the plight of people fleeing from conflicts, violence and persecution.

It is our firm conviction that the phenomenon of the forced displacement should be addressed properly, including its root causes and the human rights of refugees, internally displaced, stateless and other persons of concern. We all ought to respond to a global forced displacement crisis which is manifested by record figures.

Chairperson,

Exactly a year ago, my predecessor drew the attention of this Committee that despite the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire Azerbaijan had unleashed a large-scale military aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabakh. It threatened global and regional peace and security and led to a humanitarian crisis that still awaits appropriate international response.

As a result of this aggression more than 91 000 people fled to Armenia, 88% of them were women and children. More than 40 000 people were

deprived of their homes and property as their villages and towns are currently occupied by Azerbaijani armed forces. Many of them have become victims of repeated forced displacement, since they had fled the ethnic cleansing committed by Azerbaijan in the 1990s.

A year ago, the Nagorno Karabakh war and forced displacement it caused were at the front pages of the international media. Today, as the new worrying crises have erupted and unfolded in various parts of the world, the plight of the displaced people from Artsakh seems to be neglected. The UNHCR attempted to strengthen and scale up its operational response to address the humanitarian and protection dimensions. Nevertheless, the victims of forced displacement and mass atrocities in Artsakh are still largely deprived of international humanitarian assistance, protection, and have little prospects for durable solutions.

The UN, its agencies and other humanitarian actors have been bestowed with a universal mandate and should enjoy unconditional, unimpeded, unhindered and unfettered access to people in need, wherever they are and in all circumstances. Armenia finds unacceptable politicization of the humanitarian access to Nagorno Karabakh. We call upon the international community to assume responsibility for ensuring unconditional access to the whole territory of Nagorno Karabakh, including those areas that are occupied by the Azerbaijani forces and were ethnically cleansed of their indigenous Armenian population. The extension of humanitarian assistance should in no way or shape undermine the human rights of the affected persons, their safety and dignity, or discriminate them because of their origin, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin or other status.

As of now, the people of Nagorno Karabakh can get international assistance only in Armenia, which encourages forcibly displaced people or those at the risk of displacement to move and stay in the Republic of Armenia. There should be an effective solution found, which would not become another contributing factor sustaining and encouraging further displacement from Nagorno Karabakh.

The article 7 of the trilateral ceasefire statement of 9 November 2020 reads: “The internally displaced persons and refugees shall return to

Nagorno Karabakh and adjacent areas under the supervision of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees”. This provision mandates UNHCR to approach its activities in the conflict zone, including the issue of access to it, in the status-neutral manner. None of the parties to this statement should claim exclusive rights in its implementation, and the access should be ensured in an evenhanded and status-neutral manner, and we stand ready to cooperate with the UNHCR to ensure this approach.

Finally, Armenia stands for the full-fledged launch of the peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework and mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship which should address the return of Armenians to their homes in all parts of Nagorno-Karabakh.

I thank you.

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72nd session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme (4 – 8 October 2021)

Agenda Item 3: General debate (Right of Reply Segment)

7 October 2021

Delivered by Mr. Nairi Petrossian, Deputy Permanent Representative

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me.

Armenia requested the floor to exercise its right of reply to Azerbaijan. We heeded the call of the High Commissioner about avoiding politicization as well as reminding of the humanitarian nature of this Committee. Hence, Armenia will exercise utmost restraint, as we did it in our main remarks during the General debate.

There were numerous allegations made by Azerbaijan, which we reject. It is utterly unacceptable that Azerbaijan abused this Committee to glorify war and atrocities it perpetrated. We, nevertheless, will concentrate only on the most important issue which has been a root

cause for the forced displacement in the context of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Armenia is deeply disappointed that Azerbaijan did not miss the opportunity to deny the very existence of Nagorno Karabakh and its people, and further utilized for that matter the platform of this very humanitarian Committee. Armenia is extremely concerned since it was not an isolated incident. It appears to be part and parcel of a consistent attempt to revise and wiggle out of the 9 November 2020 trilateral Statement. It is the document that established the ceasefire and mandated the UNHCR to work in Nagorno Karabakh. It contains further several references to Nagorno Karabakh. This document bears the signature of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan thinks it can choose *a-la cart* from the international law and UN Security Council resolutions by cherry-picking the provisions it finds suitable to its own interests.

Armenia reiterates what we stated: We resolutely stand for the full-fledged resumption of the peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under the aegis and within the framework and mandate provided internationally to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. This process should address all issues related to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including the safe, dignified and voluntary return of the Armenians to their homes in all parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, including those that are currently temporarily occupied by the armed forces of Azerbaijan.

I will stop here. Mr. Chairman, I thank you.