



12 October 2022

UNHCR Executive Committee 73rd Session (10-14 October 2022)

Agenda item 3: General debate

Delivered by H.E. Mr. Andranik HOVHANNISYAN, Permanent Representative

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished High Commissioner,

Dear Colleagues,

One hundred years ago, an intergovernmental conference convened by Fridtjof Nansen adopted a Certificate of identity for refugees that became known as the Nansen Passport. It was a turning point for the international refugee protection and allowed almost half a million people, among them many Armenians, to reestablish themselves in exile. Mr. Nansen spearheaded the coordination of the international relief efforts and set up what would become the basic structure of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

Today it is an international humanitarian endeavor that has a direct impact on the lives of more than 100 million people. This stark and alarming figure continues to grow, as it crossed that chilling threshold. We are gratified that Mr. Filippo Grandi will lead this UN body for two and a half more years ahead, and we wish him every success throughout this tenure.

Mr. Chairperson,

Armenia hosts tens of thousands persons of concern, including refugees, persons in a refugee-like situation, internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. In addition to the thousands of people displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh and refugees from Syria, throughout this year my nation has been receiving new migratory flows of tens of thousands of people from Russia and Ukraine. Several thousand people got displaced only a month ago due to Azerbaijan's unjustified attack against the sovereign territory of Armenia.

The Government and civil society of Armenia closely collaborate with the UNHCR to address these challenges. An extensive structural remaking of our whole system is envisaged by a project recently launched by my authorities and the European Union, which is implemented by the UNHCR and International Organization for Migration. This joint endeavor aims to strengthen Armenia's asylum and migration management capacities, modernize and reform our legislative and regulatory framework. We currently focus on some vital

institutional reforms such as digitalization and simplification of the migration management and service provision systems, and enhancement of the mechanisms for the reception of asylum-seekers.

Armenia further welcomes that the UNHCR established a field unit in Goris, in the southern part of Armenia. That was a step in the right direction for addressing the plight of the tens of thousands victims of forced displacement from Nagorno-Karabakh. It is unfortunate that Azerbaijan continues to employ politically motivated pretexts to prevent the UNHCR from working with the displaced ethnic Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Distinguished High Commissioner,

Armenia took note of your continued commitment to seek access to Nagorno-Karabakh in line with the article 7 of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020. We strongly believe that it should be based on humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, which are the fundamental principles for the humanitarian action. It should not 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.

Armenia regrets that yesterday the delegate of Azerbaijan disregarded your and Chair's repeated calls not to politicize this humanitarian forum and yet again abused this Committee by glorifying the war unleashed by Azerbaijan.

We would like to refute grossly inflated figures and distortions brought up by Azerbaijan, including its long-recycled allegations that Armenia was planting mines in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia provided Azerbaijan with all the maps of the minefields under its possession, and that has been acknowledged by the high-ranking officials of Azerbaijan.

The International Court of Justice conclusion on this matter was very clear: (and I quote) "Azerbaijan has not placed before the Court evidence indicating that Armenia's alleged conduct with respect to landmines has "the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing", of rights of persons of Azerbaijani national or ethnic origin." (end of the quote).

Hence, it was yet another piece of propaganda on the part of Azerbaijan, which thus attempted to mislead both the international community and its own public to cover up its failures on the unfulfilled promises.

I thank you.