



**THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Statement

by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov

**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Azerbaijan**

**at the General Debate of the Sixty-Seventh Session of the
United Nations General Assembly**

New York, 28 September 2012

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as the President of the sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly and wish him every success in fulfilling this highly responsible duty. We are also grateful to Mr. Nassir Abdul-Aziz Al-Nasser for his able Presidency of the sixty-sixth session.

It is the first General Debate that I am addressing since Azerbaijan's election as the non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. I would like to express our sincere gratitude and profound appreciation to the Governments of Member States of the United Nations for their valuable support to our candidacy and strong solidarity with Azerbaijan during 17 rounds of elections.

Mr. President,

The theme of the current General Debate, entitled "Adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", is timely and topical. It represents also the logical continuation of discussions we had during the last session. Indeed, the peaceful settlement of disputes is one of the key and core principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter. Its true value is to commit States to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of each other, refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force and resolve their disputes in conformity with international law.

At its sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth sessions, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions on the strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, and the Secretary-General submitted a report, which contains the Guidance for Effective Mediation.

As one of the co-sponsors of these resolutions, Azerbaijan considers the process initiated by their adoption as an essential effort towards reinforcing the promotion of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as providing the existing and future mediation mechanisms with useful guidance. It is crucial that the mentioned resolutions of the General Assembly and the Guidance for Effective Mediation developed by the Secretary-General reaffirmed the key importance of the UN Charter, international law and justice, in particular the commitment to respect and uphold the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

During Azerbaijan's Presidency in the Security Council this May, we organized an Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council to encourage a frank exchange of views, within a flexible procedural framework, on the role of mediation, judicial settlement and justice in promoting durable and international-law-based peace and reconciliation. We look forward to further initiatives on the topic in the General Assembly and the Security Council with the view of contributing to developing and implementing comprehensive peace strategies within particular frameworks, providing that dispute settlement and conflict resolution are based on respect for the rule of law and for justice.

Mr. President,

The world continues facing persistent, grave and systematic violations of fundamental norms and principles of international law. There are still instances where archaic patterns of the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of States are practiced for achieving territorial gains. Hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world continue to suffer from aggressions, military occupations, ethnic cleansings and prevailing culture of impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

The ongoing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan continues to represent a serious threat and challenge to international and regional peace and security. The conflict has resulted in the occupation of almost 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan and has made more than one million people in the country an internally displaced person or refugee. The war led to the deaths and wounding of thousands of Azerbaijanis, including women, the elderly and children. The aggression against Azerbaijan has severely damaged the socio-economic sphere of the country. No single Azerbaijani historic and cultural monument was left undamaged and no sacred site escaped desecration both in the occupied territories and in Armenia.

We sincerely believe that there is no alternative to peace, stability and mutually beneficial regional cooperation. As a country suffering from the occupation of its territories and the forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of its citizens, Azerbaijan is the most interested party in the earliest negotiated settlement of the conflict. Without prejudice to its rights under the UN Charter, in particular those set forth in Article 51, Azerbaijan embarked on and remains committed to the conflict settlement process, being confident that its objective is to put an end to the illegal Armenian occupation, to restore the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, to ensure the return of forcibly displaced people to their homes and to guarantee the peaceful coexistence of Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in the Nagorno-Karabakh region within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

On the contrary, attempts by the Armenian side to misinterpret the norms and principles of international law and its insistence on unrealistic annexationist claims, which Azerbaijan will never accept, speak to the real intentions of the leadership of Armenia and represent an open challenge to the conflict settlement process and a serious threat to international and regional peace and security.

In flagrant violation of the UN Charter, Armenia continues to use force to sustain the occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other seven districts of Azerbaijan, to prevent Azerbaijani internally displaced persons from returning to their homes. It undertakes efforts to alter the demographic balance in the occupied territories and remove any signs of their Azerbaijani cultural and historical roots.

Additionally, regular ceasefire violations and deliberate attacks by the armed forces of Armenia against the inhabitants of towns and villages in Azerbaijan situated along the front line and the border between the two States have become more frequent and violent in recent times, resulting in the killing and injuring of many Azerbaijani civilians.

We have no doubt that Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of Nagorno-Karabakh will one day live shoulder-to-shoulder in peace and dignity in this region of Azerbaijan. It is therefore essential and vital to continue efforts for inter-communal peace and coexistence for both communities of that region. Azerbaijan considers this an important part of the whole reconciliation process and accepted on a number of occasions the proposals made by different European NGOs to hold inter-communal meetings. However, these proposals have so far been blocked by official Yerevan. Moreover, the aggressive rhetoric and the undisguised promotion by the leadership of Armenia of the odious ideas of racial superiority, ethnic and religious incompatibility and hatred towards Azerbaijan and other neighboring nations only contribute to deepening mistrust and making the prospect of a speedy negotiated settlement elusive.

The situation is further complicated by Armenia's irresponsible and unacceptable behavior in the overly sensitive domain of justice and reconciliation. Perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including acts of genocide against Azerbaijani people, not only remain unpunished, they are even promoted, venerated and officially awarded hero titles in Armenia. Schools, universities and streets are named after them, and monuments erected to them. War criminals, who do not even hide the proud of their role in mass killing of Azerbaijani civilians, are reincarnated as highly positioned politicians, military commanders and public figures.

Armenia must finally realize that the irresponsible and provocative policy of territorial claims, animosity and hatred towards neighbouring countries and nations, based on historical, cultural, racial and religious prejudices, has no chance to succeed. The earlier it grasps this, the sooner our countries will be able to reach mutual understanding, and enjoy peace, stability and cooperation.

It is clear that both the conflict settlement process and its outcome cannot be inconsistent with international law. Consequently, the achievement of peace, security, stability and confidence is possible, first and foremost, only by removing the consequences of the illegal use of force by Armenia, thus ensuring that the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan is ended and that the rights of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons to return to their homes and to their property and possessions are guaranteed and implemented. This is what international law and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions require and this is what that can in no way be introduced as a compromise and used as a bargaining chip in the conflict settlement process. The implementation by Armenia of the obligation to withdraw its armed forces from the territory of Azerbaijan and to resolve outstanding issues of State responsibility for the former's internationally wrongful acts cannot be made conditional upon addressing the aggressor's unlawful and unacceptable claims.

The fact that the situation has remained unresolved so long does not speak for strength and efficiency of the international organisations dealing with the issue. It is self-understood that the primary role in the resolution of the conflict resides within the States involved in it. At the same time, when it comes to the principles, it is the duty of all of us to defend them. In that regard, Azerbaijan highly appreciates the principled stance of the States Members of the United Nations expressed in various formats on issues of vital importance for Azerbaijan and pertaining to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, including at the most recent Summits of NATO, OIC and NAM. We count on the continued resolve of the international community in defending the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and its strong solidarity with the just position of Azerbaijan.

Mr. President,

We would like to express our concern over the situation with regard to the Middle East peace process, which has been at a standstill with no substantive progress towards resuming direct talks between the parties. We call upon the parties to create the necessary conditions conducive to the resumption of negotiations. In this regard, we share the concerns of the international community over the settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, which place a tremendous burden on civilians, cause serious obstruction to the peace process and, more dangerously, threaten the two-state solution and the emergence of a viable Palestinian State. We reiterate our support for the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations and look forward to a solution on this issue based on international law.

Azerbaijan remains deeply concerned about the escalation of violence and worsening socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Syria. We believe that the solution to the crisis lies in the hands of the Syrian people, their desire for mutual reconciliation and all-inclusive political process. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as the Joint Special Representative for Syria of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and express our firm support to his efforts.

We cannot but once again express our deep concern over the recent escalation provoked by blasphemy against Islam. We strongly condemn all assaults against religions. At the same time, attacks on civilians, in particular diplomatic personnel, are unjustifiable under any circumstances. It is critical to foster a global dialogue and cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, peace and better understanding across countries, cultures and civilizations.

Mr. President,

We are confident that during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly Member States will be able to take successful steps towards a stronger and more effective United Nations. With its active participation in the work of the organs of the UN, most notably the General Assembly and UN Security Council, Azerbaijan will continue to be in the forefront of international efforts to that end.

Thank you.