



**Statement by H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan,  
at the General Debate of the 78<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly**

**“Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action  
on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards  
peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all”**

***New York, 23 September 2023***

Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis on assuming the Presidency of the 78th session of the General Assembly and thank the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for his hard work over the past year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world continues to face a multitude of challenges that transcend boundaries. From exacerbating climate change trends to rooted poverty, rising tensions, and ravaging pandemics, these challenges plague us all, regardless of our background or location, and require bold and concerted actions.

The current state of international politics is becoming increasingly fragmented, leading to division and erosion of multilateralism.

The growing trend of intolerance and discrimination, in particular Islamophobia and alarming surge in hate speech are disturbing. To curb this challenge, with centuries-long tradition of diversity and multiculturalism, Azerbaijan firmly believes in fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and

respect among different cultures and religions. The Government of Azerbaijan has consistently promoted intercultural and interfaith dialogue through significant global initiatives, such as the Baku Process and “Peace4Culture.”

Amidst the growing challenges, it is paramount that the United Nations, continue galvanize international solidarity and cooperation.

The UN has a mandate to ensure that every nation has an equal voice and is treated on the same footing. The UN Charter principles and purposes are binding worldwide and must be applied consistently, not selectively.

Azerbaijan advocates for a reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system, with the UN at its core, underpinned by strict adherence to and non-selective application of the norms and principles of international law.

We look forward to the Summit of the Future as an opportunity to reinvigorate global action and reflect on collective commitment to the UN Charter and multilateralism.

Excellencies,

In its national capacity and as the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, Azerbaijan continues contributing to peace, security and global Sustainable Development Agenda, and spares no effort to promote international solidarity and multilateralism.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan has been at the forefront, putting forward several global initiatives to fight this challenge.

The lingering effects of the pandemic create a pressing need to redouble our efforts for global cooperation and solidarity, anchored in high-level political engagement and collaboration involving all vital stakeholders.

International cooperation and political engagement require involvement of different stakeholders, including women and youth. Azerbaijan made this a key focus point of its NAM Chairmanship through the foundation of the NAM Youth Organization with a permanent secretariat in Baku under the Shusha Accord and initiation of the establishment of the NAM Women Platform. Azerbaijan also spearheaded the foundation of the NAM Parliamentary Network.

We must strengthen joint efforts in tackling the pandemic's consequences and consolidate efforts for global recovery from COVID-19.

In light of this, the President of Azerbaijan initiated establishing a UN High-level Panel on post-pandemic global recovery. In March 2023 we hosted the NAM Contact Group Summit in Response to COVID-19, where the President of Azerbaijan, in his capacity as the NAM Chair, declared two Global Calls to support the post-pandemic recovery of Africa and Small Island Developing States. Azerbaijan announced allocations to each of these Calls as the first donor.

Since 2020, Azerbaijan provided humanitarian, economic and technical assistance worth of 300 million USD to over 130 nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we approach the mid-term of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, many parts of the world struggle to achieve our shared vision of future. It is imperative that we concertedly confront these challenges.

Since their adoption, Azerbaijan has been a passionate supporter of promoting and implementing the SDGs universally.

We have been pursuing transformational changes in remodeling our economy, focusing on sustainability, inclusive growth, social justice, and clean energy.

Azerbaijan's GDP has tripled in less than two-decade span. Poverty went down from 49% to 5%. The external public debt is expected to be some 10% of the GDP for 2023, one of the lowest globally.

The clean environment and green growth became one of the five priority areas of our new national development strategy. Azerbaijan voluntarily pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 40% by 2050 and establish a green energy zone in its Garabagh and Eastern Zangazur regions.

Azerbaijan's role in global energy security has further expanded from traditional crude oil supplier into a reliable natural gas provider. With the completion of the Southern Gas Corridor, the biggest infrastructure project in Europe, Azerbaijan is now the natural gas supplier of five more European

countries. In a time when European energy security faces unprecedented challenges, currently seven countries receive natural gas from Azerbaijan. And in near future this will increase to ten European countries.

The projected increase in renewable electricity production will allow Azerbaijan to become an exporter of green electricity to European countries through the landmark trans-regional Black Sea Submarine Cable Project that Azerbaijan embarks on with partner countries.

Azerbaijan is also a key player in the development of trans-regional connectivity projects. In 2022, we have increased the transit flow by 70 per cent through boosting investments in transportation infrastructure and widening cooperation with our regional partners.

Mr. President,

Despite unprecedented suffering, deprivation, and devastation that the people of Azerbaijan were subjected to due to the 30 year-long military occupation, Azerbaijan initiated normalization agenda and offered peace to Armenia based on equal and reciprocal respect for legitimate interests of both sides through mutual recognition of and respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of borders.

Over the past few months, thanks to concerted efforts of international partners, negotiations have intensified, and yielded limited, but promising results.

Yet, what we observe is replication by Armenia of the past pattern to imitate talks, backtrack from previously undertaken commitments at the last minute, and commit political, military, and other provocations at every negotiation stage to evade taking concrete decisions.

As such, the efforts for durable peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia have again become hostage to Armenia's policy of revanchism.

For almost three years since November 2020, more than ten thousand-strong armed formations equipped with heavy offensive weaponry were sustained by Armenia in the sovereign soil of Azerbaijan, including by abusing the Lachin road, in an attempt to fuel separatism.

In this period, while being engaged in negotiations, we have been consistently drawing the attention of all international actors involved into the

normalization process and the wider international community to the serious threat stemming from the non-fulfilment of Armenia's commitments and urging for peaceful solution.

While our legitimate and facts-based concerns were acknowledged behind the closed doors, it failed to be translated into real steps and targeted public messages to persuade Armenia to honor its commitments.

Consequently, Armenia felt emboldened and once again fell into the illusion that it would be better off by opting for status-quo based on illegal military presence and "Line of Contact logic" in the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan.

Armenia further embarked on igniting tension through a global campaign of manipulation and disinformation targeting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and blatantly interfering with internal affairs.

For months now, Armenia mobilized all available resources for manipulation campaign based on fabricated allegations of "blockade", "humanitarian crisis" or "ethnic cleansing".

For this purpose, Armenia recklessly politicized and essentially obstructed the delivery of goods to the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan for its agenda of separatism and blocked consistent efforts of several international actors to find a legitimate and practical solutions through dialogue.

On September 18, 2023, simultaneous delivery of humanitarian goods through Aghdam and Lachin, which was offered by Azerbaijan months ago and positively received by all involved international actors, was finally conducted by the ICRC as Armenia had to withdraw its weeks-long obstructions.

Azerbaijan, like wider international community, welcomed this development hoping that it would finally lead to de-escalation on the ground and pave the way for restoring the focusing on pressing issues pertinent to inter-state normalization.

Yet, Armenia failed to meet these expectations, for yet another time, and resorted to military provocation in an attempt continue its blame game against Azerbaijan.

Thus, one day later, mine planting by Armenian sabotage group led to tragic death of six Azerbaijani citizens, two civilians and four police officers, in two separate mine explosions. Other six police officers were seriously injured.

In response, Azerbaijan launched local counter-terror measures to neutralize illegal armed formations to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity and to protect the safety and security of its residents.

These measures were limited and proportionate, exclusively aimed at neutralizing legitimate military targets by using high-precision ammunition in full compliance with norms of humanitarian law. All measures were taken to avoid collateral damage.

In less than 24 hours, the horrific scale of illegal militarization of territories of Azerbaijan became clear with neutralization of more than 90 military outposts, 20 combat vehicles, 40 artillery pieces, 30 mortars, 6 electromagnetic warfare (EW) systems, and 2 anti-aircraft missile systems.

More evidence is being collected now as disarmament continues on the ground.

No sovereign state would tolerate illegal military presence on its soil. Nor did Azerbaijan.

The counter-terror measures taken by Azerbaijan achieved the set goals. Armenia and its subordinate illegal regime were forced to agree to disarm, disband all illegal structures and withdraw from Azerbaijan.

The reason why it did not happen peacefully lies in brazen disregard by Armenia and lack of adequate action by involved third-party facilitators.

Excellences,

As counter-terror measures halted, Azerbaijan has now embarked on practical implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts on the ground.

The long overdue meeting of the Special Representative of the Government of Azerbaijan with representatives of Armenian residents finally took place on September 21, in the city of Yevlakh.

The dialogue will continue as a format to directly discuss the plans of the Government for reintegration, as well as to address the issues related to restoration and operation of infrastructures and the delivery of humanitarian goods and public services.

The central Government institutions have expeditiously started to implement necessary humanitarian support measures. All efforts have now been mobilized to address the immediate needs of the local civilians.

On this point, I wish to reiterate that Azerbaijan is determined to reintegrate ethnic Armenian residents of the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan as equal citizens. The Constitution, the national legislation of Azerbaijan, and the international commitments we have undertaken provide the solid ground to this end.

Excellences,

Despite all serious challenges stemming from Armenia's destructive position, Azerbaijan once again reaffirms its readiness for a genuine dialogue and negotiations with Armenia on the basis of equal and reciprocal respect for each other's legitimate interests.

We continue to firmly believe that there is a historic opportunity for both Azerbaijan and Armenia to establish good-neighborly relations and co-exist side-by-side in peace as two sovereign states within their internationally recognized borders.

It is high time to seize this opportunity.

For that, it is necessary for Armenia to finally realize that rejecting the offer for just and equal peace in expectation of better conditions in the future to achieve revanchist purposes is not viable and has no chance to succeed.

Verbal statements by the leadership of Armenia on recognizing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, including the Garabagh region, must be transformed into tangible steps.

Meaningful engagement by international actors that are able and willing to support Azerbaijan and Armenia in this endeavor in a fair, impartial and unbiased manner is critical. It is equally important for all those who are unable to be an honest broker, to refrain from projecting their short-sighted agendas into this process.

All efforts need to be mobilized to build upon the already achieved progress and finalize the normalization process without further delay. Azerbaijan is determined and steadfast to promote the normalization agenda.

Excellencies,

Along with the inter-state process of normalization with Armenia, Azerbaijan launched large-scale rehabilitation, reconstruction efforts to eliminate the harsh consequences of the thirty year-long military occupation of our territories. These activities aim at ensuring the right of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis to eventually exercise their violated right to safe and dignified return.

Thanks to the tireless efforts taken by the Government, life now returns to the territories that have experienced unprecedented vandalism in 30 years of Armenia's military occupation. The first groups of displaced families have already returned to their places of origin.

Regrettably, the massive contamination of territories of Azerbaijan with landmines and other explosive devices remains a significant obstacle to smooth progress of rehabilitation and reconstruction. This contamination is posing a threat to those returning home after being displaced for three decades.

The refusal of Armenia to share all maps of mined areas and the continued planting of landmines, installation of booby traps and other explosives even after the declaration of cessation of all military activities, further aggravates the situation and increases the human toll.

Since November 2020, 315 individuals have fallen victim to landmines planted by Armenia. Some mines were transferred to the territory of Azerbaijan and planted therein after the signing of the Trilateral Statement.

Given the ongoing landmine problem in Azerbaijan and the challenges national agencies face in addressing it, there is an urgent need for increased international support to strengthen Azerbaijan's humanitarian mine action capacity. Such support would not only aid in demining efforts but also contribute to the global campaign against landmines and demonstrate a commitment to peace and cooperation in the region.

Dear colleagues,



Ensuring justice concerning serious war crimes and crimes against humanity is vital in healing the wounds of the past conflict. While accountability and redress ensure the rights and interests of the victims, they are also critical prerequisites on the path to genuine post-conflict normalization and reconciliation.

Over more than 30 years of aggression and occupation, Armenia subjected Azerbaijani cultural heritage to desecration and destruction. This included numerous monuments of world and national importance, mosques, temples, mausoleums, museums, art galleries, archaeological sites, and libraries.

The fate of almost 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan including 719 civilians, who went missing during the conflict, remains unknown. Although several mass graves were discovered in the liberated territories, shedding light on the wilful killing of Azerbaijani civilians and other persons protected under international humanitarian law, Armenia refuses to clarify the whereabouts of missing persons. Resolving this issue is essential not only in terms of accountability, and the rights of the victims and their families, but also for post-conflict reconciliation and normalization.

From 1987 to 1991, Armenia forcefully expelled some 300,000 Azerbaijanis from their ancestral homeland in blatant violation of international law. All Azerbaijani settlements and toponyms in Armenia were renamed, and our historical and cultural heritage deliberately was vandalized and destroyed. Despite repeated calls by the Western Azerbaijan Community to launch a dialogue and ensure a safe and dignified return to the homeland, the Government of Armenia denies them exercising the fundamental right of return enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and other important international acts.

While remaining committed to its international obligations and open to constructive dialogue, Azerbaijan will not tolerate violations of international law and will continue taking appropriate steps at international level. In particular, Azerbaijan's initiation of judicial proceedings to hold Armenia accountable for grave violations of international human rights law, and to bring to justice those responsible for crimes, is a significant step towards achieving accountability.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the objectives of a peaceful, secure, stable, and prosperous South Caucasus. We will continue the efforts towards

advancing post-conflict peacebuilding, reintegration, and peaceful coexistence while, as a responsible actor, sparing no effort in all relevant domains, be it post-COVID recovery, global development agenda, or energy security.

The challenges we face today require a renewed commitment to international cooperation and solidarity. It is only through joint efforts that we can overcome present and future complex challenges to build a brighter future for ourselves and coming generations.

I thank you, Mr. President.