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No:393/24, Speech of Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeyhun Bayramov in the General Debate of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Azerbaijan,

General Debate of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly

“Leaving no one behind: Acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations”

28 September 2024

UN Headquarters

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

I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Philémon Yang on assuming the Presidency of the 79th session of the General Assembly and thank the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis, for his outstanding efforts in leading the previous session.

I also thank His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations, for his continuous efforts to achieve the noble objectives of the UN.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world continues to grapple with a wide range of challenges that no single country can overcome alone. The worsening global climate crisis, rising inequalities, emerging divides, and heightened tensions affect us all, irrespective of background or location. It is high time to demonstrate that multilateralism works and can deliver with a unified voice, leaving no one behind.

The current state of international politics is divisive, with universally accepted fundamental norms and principles of international law being disregarded and misinterpreted.

In the face of continued erosion of multilateralism, it is paramount that the United Nations continues to foster international solidarity and cooperation.

The UN Charter principles and purposes constitute the foundational normative framework in international relations, and must be applied consistently, not selectively.

The UN is mandated to ensure that every nation has an equal voice and is treated on the same footing.

In this regard, 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 universally accepted norms and principles of international law.

Urgent progress is needed on the UN Security Council reforms, based on the work done and the gains achieved in good faith and a spirit of flexibility, constructiveness, and cooperation.

We view the pivotal Summit of the Future, held a week ago, as a renewal of our common commitment to international law, the UN Charter, multilateralism, and international cooperation. The Pact for the Future, its negotiated outcome, is a blueprint for building a better, more sustainable, and prosperous world for everyone.

It is time for our collective commitments to turn into real and decisive action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The global climate crisis threatens decades of progress, imperils humanity's future, and disproportionately affects vulnerable countries. Growing divisions in international relations shouldn't distract us from the imperative to address climate change, the greatest transnational challenge of the century.

What has been done so far remains insufficient to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C. For the sake of the future, the time has come for urgent, concerted, and sustained efforts to give effect to our commitments to a global vision for sustainable development.

November 2024, Azerbaijan will host the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Guided by the call In Solidarity for a Green World, Azerbaijan will spare no effort to bridge developed and developing countries and foster a collaborative spirit to tackle climate challenges as a common commitment and moral duty.

The confidence placed in us by the international community to host and preside over COP29 this year is a testament and recognition to Azerbaijan's readiness to lead the climate agenda and contribute to global climate action. As the Incoming Presidency, Azerbaijan reaffirms its commitment to delivering COP29 in a transparent, impartial, inclusive, and party-driven manner.

We have presented our vision based on two parallel pillars to enhance ambition and enable action, with climate finance as our top priority this year. These pillars are mutually reinforcing – progress on each sends a strong signal supporting the other.

The primary expectation for the COP29 Presidency is an agreement on a fair and ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance.

This will be the first major climate finance goal after adopting the Paris Agreement, and we have been working tirelessly to support the Parties in landing a deal.

The COP29 Presidency made it clear that agreeing on a fair and ambitious NCQG that is adequate to the urgency and scale of the problem and takes into account the needs and priorities of developing countries is the ultimate test of the Parties' commitment to the Paris Agreement and climate action in the years ahead.

We need to continue to work constructively on the NCQG and steer the process to a successful outcome at COP29.

COP 29 Presidency also works with the Parties to deliver an outcome on carbon markets this year. Fully functioning carbon markets will be a significant step in implementing nationally determined contributions (NDCs) cost-effectively and bolstering ambition in mitigation.

Moreover, we have put forward 14 initiatives covering topics such as the link between climate action and sustainable development goals, green energy zones and corridors, energy storage, harmony for climate resilience, agriculture, clean hydrogen, methane reduction from organic waste, green digital action, and more. One of the initiatives under COP29 Action Agenda includes the establishment of the Climate Finance Action Fund, an innovative source for climate finance to be voluntarily supported by fossil fuel-producing countries and companies.

COP29 will also be an opportunity to set differences aside and contribute to global peace and the climate agenda. Given the intersection of conflicts and the increasingly challenging climate crisis, Azerbaijan introduced a flagship COP29 Truce Initiative embedded in the Joint Solemn Appeal announced a few days ago.

More than thousand NGOs, Faith Leaders and prominent personalities, as well as many parties have already joined this Appeal. We call on everyone to transcend political divergences, stand in unity, and respect the Truce during the month of COP29.

Excellencies,

Azerbaijan has always been at the forefront of promoting international peace, and security, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, contributing to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and fostering global solidarity and multilateralism.

Azerbaijani Chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement in 2019-2023 has marked by the Movement's enhanced role and increased contributions to a collaborative spirit in international relations. Under visionary leadership of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, decisive steps were taken to enhance international solidarity and galvanize collective response to global challenges at a time of erosion of multilateralism.

Guided by a noble call to leave no one behind, Azerbaijan continues to lend its support to developing countries in need. Since 2020, we have provided humanitarian, economic, and technical assistance worth USD 330 million to over 140 nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we past the halfway mark of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we observe stagnation in its implementation. With only 17% of SDG targets on track, we need an urgent and accelerated progress.

At a national level, we are taking necessary measures to implement the SDGs and setting an example for others to follow. We have fully embraced the SDGs nationally, prioritizing 17 goals, 88 targets, and 119 indicators. This has been achieved through collaborative and inclusive process involving civil society, the business community, youth, and other key stakeholders.

Azerbaijan's GDP has risen four times in less than two-decade span. Poverty has gone down from 49% to 5%. The external public debt is expected to be some 7% of the GDP for 2024, one of the lowest globally.

Clean environment and green growth became one of the five priority areas of our new national development strategy. In line with this, Azerbaijan is looking into ways of further Greenhouse Gas Emission reductions and working on its 1.5C aligned NDC. A few months ago, we have joined the 2030 Global Methane Pledge.

We will also establish green energy zones and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 in the Garabagh and Eastern Zangazur regions.

Azerbaijan will continue to play an essential role in global energy security, contributing to sustainable development, eradication of poverty and helping millions to transition to clean energy in the region and beyond. Share of renewables in the total installed electrical capacity in Azerbaijan will reach 30% by 2030. This high target is established, primarily, to improve energy efficiency and introduce innovative solutions in urban environment, transport systems, and industry.

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

Mr. President,

In the face of increasing challenges, coming together in unity and solidarity and fostering dialogue and mutual understanding is an absolute necessity.

With a centuries-long tradition of diversity and multiculturalism, Azerbaijan firmly believes in a dialogue and collaborative spirit, mutual understanding, and respect among different cultures and religions. Azerbaijan put particular focus to the promotion of a culture of peace and encouraging intercultural and interreligious dialogue worldwide, including through the “Baku Process” and “Peace4Culture” initiatives.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The end of armed conflict with Armenia and restoration of Azerbaijan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity created substantially new environment in the South Caucasus. For the first time since decades, stability has been achieved on the ground, de-facto peace is established.

By putting an end to military occupation, it is Azerbaijan that created conditions, for both parties to eventually turn the page of enmity and embark on good-neighbourly relations.

This process was launched by Azerbaijan in the immediate aftermath of its victory in the 44-Day Patriotic War.

This offer was made despite unhealed wounds of the conflict still persist to date in the form of razing to the ground of dozens of cities and hundreds of towns and villages, destruction and desecration of each and every piece of historical and cultural heritage and barbaric pillage of natural resources.

Azerbaijan demonstrated political wisdom and will by offering Armenia peace on equal terms, fully in line with norms and principles of international law, on the basis of mutual recognition of and respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Over the past year, Azerbaijan and Armenia have registered significant progress in the normalization process through direct bilateral negotiations, in particular with respect to drafting a bilateral agreement, delimitation and demarcation of state border, as well as elaboration of a set of confidence-building measures.

Azerbaijan will continue to take this process forward acting with strong sense of responsibility for not only its national security and well-being, but also for ensuring a better future for entire region. Our commitment and determination remain intact to bring this process to its logical conclusion.

For the finalization of the normalization process, Armenia has yet to legally abandon territorial claims against Azerbaijan once and for all through implementing constitutional amendments. Armenia's negligence with respect to implementation of constitutional amendments combined with dramatic increase in military budget, acquisition of large amount of offensive weaponry from both traditional and new suppliers and attempts to maintain obsolete conflict-driven narratives and structures, derails the normalization process.

Establishment of peace and good-neighbourly relations cannot be sustainable and irreversible if recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan remains in legal limbo, is contingent on domestic legal or political scenarios. "Partial peace" is not an option after so much pain and sufferings inflicted by irredentism and territorial claims against neighbours.

At this critical moment Azerbaijan calls for expeditious steps to address remaining impediments for finalization of the normalization process with full sense of responsibility.

Along with Armenia's responsibility to honour its international obligations and previously undertaken commitments, it is also incumbent on entire international community to encourage the sides for the establishment of genuine, sustainable and irreversible peace. Such a peace should outweigh any dividend that might be expected by manipulating one side against other or building dividing lines between them. Practices that brought devastations in other parts of the globe must be ceased to be projected to the South Caucasus by feeding revanchism.

Excellencies,

Ensuring justice with respect to serious war crimes and crimes against humanity is of vital importance in terms of healing the wounds of the past conflict.

While accountability and redress serve to ensure the rights and interests of the victims, they are also key prerequisites on the path to genuine post-conflict normalization and reconciliation.

In this regard, it is of paramount importance to shed light to the fate of about 4000 Azerbaijanis who went missing due to the conflict.

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.

Around 300,000 Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia continue to be deprived of their ancestral homeland in blatant violation of international law. 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.

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Along with inter-state process of normalization, Azerbaijan has, internally, embarked on large-scale post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. This aims at ensuring the right of hundred thousands of Azerbaijanis to eventually exercise their violated right to safe and dignified return to their homes.

Thanks to the tireless efforts taken by the Government, life now returns to the territories that have witnessed unprecedented destruction during military occupation.

Regrettably, the massive contamination of territories of Azerbaijan with landmines and other explosive devices remains a significant obstacle to the smooth progress of rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Since the end of the conflict in 2020, 377 individuals, among them civilians have fallen victim to landmines.

With this in mind, Azerbaijan has introduced a national goal, SDG18, focusing on mine action.

Given the scale of the problem, there is an urgent need for increased international support to strengthen Azerbaijan's humanitarian mine action capacity.

Taking this opportunity, I thank all countries and other stakeholders who have generously contributed to humanitarian de-mining in Azerbaijan and reiterate our call for increased international support and solidarity.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Azerbaijan's commitment to further contribute to international peace and security through promoting respect for international law and investing in international solidarity and cooperation.

We remain to be strong proponent of combined efforts to overcome challenges and pave the way for a brighter future for ourselves and the generations to come.

I thank you.

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