

**Speech by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the 65th
session of the United Nations General Assembly**

23 September, 2010

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor to join the previous speakers and congratulate H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss on his election to the post of the President of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly and wish him every success in this highly responsible post, and I would like to thank his predecessor Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki for his productive work.

I also express my profound respect and gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his leadership and dedication in reviving the United Nations Organization.

Mr. President,

Azerbaijan recognizes the central role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security, promoting sustainable development and advocating fundamental freedoms for the people of the world.

Azerbaijan believes that the United Nations has to be stronger and capable in engaging in a range of global issues in every part of the world, as well as in addressing aspirations and concerns of each Member State.

As a country suffering from the devastation of war and occupation, Azerbaijan strongly believes that faithful observance of the worldwide accepted norms and principles of international law concerning good neighbourhood, friendly relations and cooperation among States and fulfillment in good faith of the obligations assumed by States are of the greatest importance for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The ongoing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan still represents a major threat to international and regional peace and security. The conflict has resulted in the occupation of one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan and has made approximately one out of every nine persons in my country an internally displaced or refugee.

It has been internationally recognized that the Republic of Armenia bears the primary responsibility for occupying Azerbaijan's territories, committing the most serious international crimes during the conflict, carrying out ethnic cleansing, and trying to create a monoethnic culture in the captured Azerbaijani territories.

The United Nations Security Council has adopted four resolutions and expressed its full support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of the territories. It has also recognized that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan and called for immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The United Nations General Assembly and other international organizations, including the OSCE Council of Europe,

European Parliament, Organization of the Islamic Conference, have adopted a similar position. Unfortunately, despite the consolidated position of the international community, Azerbaijani territories continue to remain under the occupation.

Armenia so far instead of negotiating in good faith with a view to finding a durable solution to the conflict as soon as possible, gives preference to escalation with unpredictable consequences.

Despite ongoing political efforts towards the earliest resolution of the conflict, activities in the occupied areas of Azerbaijan are in gross violation with international law and serve to further consolidation of the current status-quo of the occupation, securing the results of ethnic cleansing and colonization of the captured territories, as well as cause serious obstruction to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Thus, over the period passed since the beginning of the conflict significant numbers of settlers have been encouraged to move into the occupied areas depopulated of their Azerbaijani inhabitants. The OSCE dispatched in 2005 the fact-finding mission to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, which found evidence of the presence of settlers there and made a call to “discourage any further settlement of the occupied territory of Azerbaijan”.

Consistent measures are being undertaken by Armenia also with the purpose of altering the historical and cultural features of the occupied areas in attempt to remove any signs testifying their original Azerbaijani cultural and historical roots. As a result, no single Azerbaijani historic or cultural monument left undamaged and no sacred site escaped vandalism in the occupied territories.

Implantation of settlers as well as destruction and appropriation of historical and cultural heritage in the occupied areas, along with various forms of illegal activity there, directly affect property rights of internally displaced persons.

The lack of agreement on political issues, protracted nature of the conflict and prolonged negotiations should not be used as a pretext for not addressing other problems deriving from continued and deliberate disrespect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law in connection with the conflict.

Mr. President,

The soonest resolution of the armed conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan remains a primary task for us. The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs countries extend their efforts to bring peace and stability to the region. The resolution of the conflict envisage the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories within the fixed time framework, restoration of all communications, return of all refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of origin, international security guarantees, including peacekeeping forces, interim status to Nagorno-Karabakh. We are ready to continue the talks in good faith for finalizing the status of Nagorno-Karabakh within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The step-by-step approach introduced to Armenia and Azerbaijan in December 2009 by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs is accepted by Azerbaijan in principle as a base for achieving a lasting resolution of Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Unfortunately, Armenia is still prolonging the definite answer to the Co-Chairs’ proposal.

Azerbaijan highly appreciates the principled stand of the Member States on the issues of vital importance for Azerbaijan pertaining to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We rely on continued solidarity of the international community with the just position of Azerbaijan and on valuable support to our initiatives within the United Nations aimed at addressing the existing challenges in an impartial, open and comprehensive manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and occupied territories, the government of Azerbaijan has succeeded in guaranteeing political stability, democratic development, economic prosperity and social welfare in the country. Today, Azerbaijan is one of the most rapidly developing economies in the world. Only within last five years Azerbaijan almost tripled its GDP.

The strategic geographic location of Azerbaijan at the intersection of major trade routes along the emerging East-West and North-South transport and energy corridors provides an important asset to turn the country into an energy and infrastructure hub.

Azerbaijan possesses considerable proved oil and gas reserves, and has good prospects for new discoveries. A modern infrastructure for transporting hydrocarbons to the international markets has already been created in Azerbaijan and has been used for exporting oil and natural gas, which can diversify and strengthen international energy security. This is particularly crucial for gas supplies. With proven reserves of 2 tcm of natural gas and potential of up to 5 tcm and even more, Azerbaijan is ready to provide its own contribution to ensure stable development of the world gas market.

Another globally important project, on which Azerbaijan is working very intensively with its neighbors, is building and enhancing the regional railroad infrastructure. This railroad connection will open an enormous opportunity for delivering all kinds of cargo between Asia and Europe.

As a very active member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Azerbaijan in an open and transparent manner uses its energy revenues for the development of the country, particularly building-up of human capital and eradication of poverty. Thus, we were able to achieve a dramatic poverty reduction from 49 percent in 2003 to 11 percent in 2009. And I strongly believe that through sustainable development Azerbaijan in upcoming years will attain even more in this field.

Mr. President,

Azerbaijan has always been a place of coexistence and tolerance between different faiths, ethnic groups and philosophies. As active member of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations, Azerbaijan contributes to the promotion of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue base on mutual respect and understanding. Azerbaijan hosted the World Summit of religious leaders of 32 states in spring of this year and has put forward an initiative to host the World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue in April 2011.

One of the most serious and long-term challenges that affect every part of the globe is the climate change. We in Azerbaijan proclaimed 2010 a year of ecology and adopted a various special programs in the field of environment protection.

Azerbaijan demonstrates full support and undertakes ceaseless efforts for promotion of

sustainable development and global prosperity for all, paying particular attention to addressing the special needs and vulnerabilities of the developing and least developed countries, as well as those who are recovering from natural disasters. Azerbaijan will continue to contribute for the realization of the development goals and objectives agreed within the United Nations.

Thank you!