

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Yashar Aliyev
Chairman of the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
at the United Nations Conference on Housing and
Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)**

Quito, Ecuador, 19 October 2016

Mr. President,
Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to extend our delegation's cordial gratitude to the Government and people of Ecuador for holding this conference in beautiful Quito and warm hospitality.

The Habitat III Conference is the first United Nations global summit after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the successful implementation of which will undoubtedly benefit from the adoption of an action oriented New Urban Agenda.

Despite the global economic crisis and other challenges, Azerbaijan has maintained the country's gradual economic growth and continues to undertake consistent efforts towards developing an inclusive and diversified economy and adapting its national sustainable development strategy to that end. On 6 October 2016, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev issued a special Decree on the Establishment of the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development, instructing it to identify national priorities and their indicators until 2030, in line with the global development goals and targets, to adapt the relevant State programs and strategies and to prepare annual national SDG progress reports.

Urban inhabitants constitute more than half of the population in Azerbaijan. Over the recent years, Azerbaijan has implemented inclusive and effective urban policies aimed at strengthening urban governance, ensuring predictability and coherence in the urban development plans, eradicating poverty, enhancing the social protection, improving the transport, ecological and water management systems in cities and towns, providing support for low-income families and other vulnerable social groups. Key legislative acts have been adopted in the country, such as the Law on the Basics of Urban Planning; the Urban Planning and Construction Code; the Housing Code, as well as a number of other important measures have been taken, including the adoption of the Social Housing Program and the establishment of the State Agency on Housing Construction.

Mr. President,

Over the period passed since the previous Habitat Conferences and the adoption of the MDGs in 2000, significant progress has been made in achieving many development goals, implementing the relevant commitments and action plans and improving the quality of life of millions of people. However, serious challenges remain, with the increasing number of homeless or those living in improper conditions, persistence of multiple forms of poverty, growing inequalities, restricted access to health, education and other essential services, environmental degradation and social and economic exclusion.

Furthermore, unresolved armed conflicts, violent extremism, terrorism, aggressive separatism, related humanitarian crises and forced population displacement undermine the ability of the affected countries to achieve sustainable development and threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent times.

The war unleashed by Armenia against Azerbaijan led to the occupation of about twenty percent of my country's territory and the emergence of hundreds of thousands refugees and internally displaced persons. Multibillion damage was inflicted on the national economy. 900 settlements, 150,000 houses, 7,000 public buildings, thousands of education and medical facilities and other infrastructure, private and public property were looted and destroyed in the occupied territories and more than one million people were deprived of their homes and property. In order to address the humanitarian crisis and the needs of the most vulnerable categories of refugees and internally displaced persons, the Government adopted a special State program and 94 temporary settlements with all social and technical infrastructure were constructed between 2001 and 2015.

In its resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), the United Nations Security Council condemned the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories, reaffirmed the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of its international borders and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Those demands not only have not been implemented, but illegal actions are being taken by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan with a view to further consolidating the current *status quo* of the occupation and preventing the forcibly displaced population from returning to their homes and properties. Such actions include implantation of settlers from Armenia and abroad, destruction and appropriation of historical and cultural heritage, exploitation and pillage of natural resources and other illegal activities.

The conflict can only be resolved on the basis of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders. The sooner Armenia reconciles with this reality and withdraws its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the earlier the conflict will be resolved and both countries and their peoples will benefit from the prospects of cooperation and economic development, thus enabling them to implement successfully the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is pertinent to note that the 2030 Agenda underscores that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development, recalls in that regard the rights and obligations of States under international law, and reaffirms the respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of States.

The New Urban Agenda also highlights the need for a special attention to situations of conflicts, countries and territories under foreign occupation, as well as to addressing multiple forms of discrimination faced, among others, by refugees and internally displaced persons.

It goes without saying that resolving armed conflicts is a principled prerequisite for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda as a critical component of the realization of sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner.

My country, Azerbaijan, will spare no effort towards ensuring peace, justice and development.

Thank you.