

Online Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement

“Bandung+65: More Relevant, United and Effective NAM against Emerging Global Challenges, including COVID-19”

9 October 2020

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

Dear colleagues,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today’s meeting is an excellent opportunity to mark the 65th anniversary of the Bandung Principles that constitute the very foundation of our Movement.

In more than 6 decades of its existence the Bandung Principles have contributed to the promotion of justice and equality in international relations and ensured respect for the norms and principles of international law. Since their inception, the Principles have been navigating the countries that had expressed their adherence to them through the turbulences of the Cold War period.

The end of Cold War and bloc-to-bloc confrontation has in no way diminished the relevance and validity of Bandung Principles. Quite contrary, in light of more complex challenges to peace and development, such as armed conflicts, aggressive expansionist policies, terrorism, separatism, transnational organized crime and extremism they have become more important than ever.

Proceeding from this understanding Azerbaijan has identified the promotion of Bandung Principles as one of its chairmanship priorities to the Non-Aligned Movement. Maintaining and further strengthening the spirit of Bandung, especially in such challenging period that we are going through, enables us to further consolidate our unity and increase the effectiveness of our Movement.

NAM is a true defender of justice and the rule of law in international relations. Being a viable and dynamic platform for the representations of diverse ideologies, NAM addresses the issues plaguing the world and matters of international concern. It is not coincidence that the Political Declaration that we are going to adopt today is very comprehensive document that encompasses the broad spectrum of issues pertaining to the agenda of global politics, such as the significance of adherence to the norms and principles of international law, fight against terrorism, unilateral coercive measures, UN peacekeeping activities, NAM’s response to Covid-19 etc. The Declaration, while expressing strong concern over growing resort to unilateralism, outlines the challenges that NAM Member States continue to face and emphasizes that

multilateralism is the only way to overcome existing and emerging threats to the global security and development.

As we are all aware, the already fragile global situation has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Operative and result-oriented response by NAM to the pandemic and its socio-humanitarian impact on Member States has been exemplary.

UN General Assembly Special Session initiated by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of NAM Member States positioned our Movement at the center of global efforts in the fight against pandemic. Except contributing to its increased visibility, COVID-related initiatives have tested responsiveness and operability of our Movement to the growing challenges, the result of which was encouraging.

Dear colleagues,

The objective of ensuring a peaceful, just and prosperous world is hardly achievable if the universally accepted fundamental values, norms and principles, including those enshrined at the UN Charter and Bandung Declaration, are overtly disregarded and misinterpreted so as to whitewash aggressions and other illegal actions.

In breach of norms and principles which laid the foundation of the United Nations and our Movement, Armenia has been occupying for almost 30 years now one fifth of internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. As a result of military aggression by Armenia hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were forcefully expelled from their homes and became internally displaced persons. In clear violation of the UN Charter Armenia has been disregarding 4 UN Security Council resolutions which demand immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from the territories of Azerbaijan.

In past 27 years since the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions Armenia has not only disregarded the demands of the Security Council, but systematically and deliberately pursued the goal of securing the annexation of the occupied territories. This included, among others, implantation of settlers into the occupied territories, destruction, pillage and looting of historical and cultural heritage, illegal exploitation of natural resources, misappropriation of private and public property in the seized lands.

Armenia frequently resorted to military and other provocations against Azerbaijan that undermined the peace process and rendered the negotiations meaningless. Prime Minister Pashinyan's statement that "Karabakh is Armenia" was a serious blow to the efforts for finding a political solution to the conflict. Over past two months accumulation of large number of weapons along the frontline accompanied by intensified subversive activities deep inside the territory of Azerbaijan were indicative of Armenia's preparation for a new act of aggression. We duly informed the international community about this growing threat by calling for restricting relationship with Armenia and persuading him to refrain from taking such a dangerous path.

Following the aggression by Armenia on September 27, 2020 which caused casualties among civilians and military servicemen of Azerbaijan, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan was obliged to undertake counter-offensive measures within the right of self-defense and in full compliance with the international humanitarian law in order to ensure the security of densely populated residential areas deep inside the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan.

On the following days, having faced series of defeats on the battlefield, Armenia resorted to terror and launched continuous missile attacks on densely populated cities of Azerbaijan far from the frontline, including Ganja - the second largest city of Azerbaijan and Mingachevir - the city that hosts the biggest water reservoir in the South Caucasus. As a result tens of civilians were killed and seriously injured, critical civilian infrastructure, including medical and educational facilities were either destroyed or seriously damaged.

Obvious goal of Armenia is to terrorize the civilian population and spread panic within Azerbaijani society in a blatant violation of international humanitarian law. Armenia also deliberately attempts to expand the geography of the conflict to engage the third parties into the conflict despite numerous statements by Azerbaijan at the highest level that Armed Forces of Azerbaijan does not have target in the territory of Armenia. Azerbaijan acts in its sovereign soil within the limits of self-defense.

Excellencies,

In this situation, when Armenia clearly disregards the norms and principles of international law, undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, grossly violates international humanitarian law by deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, it is incumbent on the international community more than ever to demonstrate principled position and express its solidarity with Azerbaijan in its just struggle to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and protect its population.

Considering the exceptional importance and urgency of the matter Azerbaijan has initiated special declaration of the Ministerial Meeting in connection with recent armed attack of Armenia against Azerbaijan the draft of which has been broadly consulted among the Member States. I use this opportunity to express my gratitude to all Member States for their active engagement and contributions during the consideration of the draft declaration which reaffirms NAM's principled support to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and to the settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Once adopted, it will further strengthen NAM's principled stance on solidarity with the Republic of Azerbaijan in support of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

There is still chance to resolve the conflict by political means. Armenia must recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and withdraw its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in accordance with a clear timetable. The solution of the conflict is possible only on the basis of the respect to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Excellencies,

Next year we will mark another important occasion – 60th anniversary of the establishment of Non-Aligned Movement.

During 60 years of its existence our Movement has proved itself to be one of the key players in the international relations system that promotes multilateralism and diplomacy for peace. It is not coincidence that 24 April – the closing date of the historic Bandung Conference of 1955 – has been declared by the UN General Assembly as International Day for Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace upon the initiative of NAM Member States.

The main task before the NAM today is to adjust its role to new realities in the geopolitical landscape by promoting and upholding its founding principles. It is more than ever critical that NAM Member States remain united and steadfast in view of the emerging threats and challenges to the international peace, security and development.

Timely reaction to and application of effective remedies on situations that affect the Member States is of utmost importance. NAM should immediately react to the emerging situations requiring its urgent attention, so that the Member States could rely on the strength and support of the Movement during their hard times.

The Member States should ensure that the Movement is a dynamic and effective mechanism to represent, coordinate and support their interests and priorities in an adequate and timely manner.

In its capacity as the NAM Chair, Azerbaijan spares and will spare no effort towards further enhancing the role and visibility of the Movement as anti-war and peace-loving force promoting, preserving and strengthening multilateralism with the United Nations at its core. We will actively work on promoting founding principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, increasing its effectiveness, as well as strengthening unity and cooperation among the NAM Member States.

I thank for your attention.