



Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

17 July 2020

The global COVID-19 pandemic is plunging the world into a socio-economic and financial crisis of an unprecedented scale. It turned into a rolling combination of global health pandemic, followed by lockdown and economic crisis. Its impact is projected to be wider as the world never seen the demand and supply shocks at the same time. More than 160 countries are going to have negative growth this year according to the IMF's latest forecasts.

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan led by President H.E. İlham Aliyev has been effectively addressing the challenges arisen from the pandemic. The comprehensive action plan against the pandemic and post-pandemic development agenda, as well as 10 mln. dollars support for the World Health Organization and appropriate containment measures played a crucial role in ensuring minimum losses from the disease.

The Government of Azerbaijan has adopted 10 programs, estimated to cost more than 3% of GDP, targeting the most vulnerable people, employment, affected businesses and banking sector. These programs are considered not only as anti-crisis measures, but also as programs which serve the goals of sustainable development, including the preservation of social balance and economic development in the post-pandemic period.

The pandemic still poses more risks of unemployment, debt and poverty in many countries, but at the same time, there are opportunities to shift faster to the knowledge-based economy, to implement policy in favor of more efficient, transparent, resilient and sustainable development. It is a strong reminder of the need for cooperation across sectors and generations. We need to bring our skills and resources together to achieve V-shaped recovery and prosperity.

Building opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all and the principle of 'leaving no one behind' is a priority for Azerbaijan and we have demonstrated a firm commitment to transitioning to sustainable development. Our Government established a high-level institutional mechanism to ensure and facilitate inclusive stakeholder participation and consolidate core resources to translation the global SDGs into a national context by aligning national plans and strategies with the SDGs. Our two Voluntary National Reviews underscore the commitment of Azerbaijan to implement all 17 SDGs and the principles that underpin the 2030 Agenda.

Prioritizing and determining national priorities for achieving the global goals in Azerbaijan is conditioned by a strategy of deep reforms in various areas of economic and social life. In this direction, it is not fortuitous that Azerbaijan got the best results among the countries of the Caspian Sea and South Caucasus regions, which were evaluated in the Sustainable Development Report 2020, being the 54th among 166 countries.

Taking this opportunity, we would like also to note that the first online Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement Contact Group in response to COVID-19 on the theme "United against COVID-19", held on 4 May 2020 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. İlham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as the initiative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, to convene a special session of the General Assembly in response to the COVID-19 at the level of Heads of State and Government, reaffirmed that Azerbaijan is not only taking effective measures to combat COVID-19 at the national level, but also making a significant contribution to the strengthening of multilateralism, solidarity and cooperation against the pandemic at the regional and global levels.

As the United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great disruption for the world, we need a stronger United Nations that is more proactive to the crisis, has an effective role at suppressing conflicts and prevention of wars, pays more attention to transformations and disruptions causing the challenges in labor markets, in line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and strengthens the global response to the threat of climate change. 10 years remain until 2030, and there are quite a lot of tasks and issues to be solved.

We hope that the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will mobilize efforts and generate positive momentum to strengthen partnerships to tackle the negative consequences of COVID-19, as well as implement sustainable development goals.

We would also like to draw attention to the issue of serious concern in connection with the reporting process of one Member State on the implementation of the SDGs. The outrageous falsifications in the maps contained at pages 24 and 29 of the voluntary national review report of Armenia on sustainable development goals, displaying the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the surrounding districts of the Republic of Azerbaijan currently under Armenia's unlawful military occupation in the same color as Armenia itself. This fact demonstrates that Armenia is an aggressor and occupier of the territories of Azerbaijan and that Armenia's annexationist policy remains unaffected by changes in its Government.

In its resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), the Security Council condemned the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories and reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory. The Security Council reconfirmed that the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied districts are an integral part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from the occupied territories. The United Nations General Assembly, in particular in its resolution *A/RES/62/243* of 14 March 2008, entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan", and other international organizations have adopted a similar position.

It is pertinent to recall that the outcome document containing the 2030 Agenda stated, inter alia, that there could be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. It further reaffirmed the commitment to international law, the need to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States and full permanent sovereignty of States over their wealth, natural resources and economic activity.

The aforementioned false information contained in the voluntary national review report of Armenia illustrates that it is in breach of these commitments. Furthermore, its attempts to consolidate the occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the surrounding seven districts of Azerbaijan, change their demographic composition and prevent the return to their homes and properties of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons, along with the destruction and appropriation of property, the exploitation and pillage of natural resources and other wealth in the occupied territories, in grave violation of international law, can in no way be consistent with the 2030 Agenda.

We reject the said falsifications as null and void, considering them as apparent non-compliance by Armenia with the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Unfortunately, during the consideration of the voluntary national review report of Armenia at the High-level Political Forum on 10 July 2020, the Chair of the meeting, the Permanent Representative of Armenia, in abuse of its powers, has ignored the repeated requests for a floor from our delegation. We express our resolute protest against the biased conduct of the meeting by the Chair, oppose its outcomes and demand that the fake maps be immediately and irreversibly removed from the report.