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Human Rights Council

Forum on Minority Issues, 13th session: *Hate Speech, Social Media and Minorities*

Panel Discussion: *Causes, scale and impact of hate speech targeting minorities on social media*

Delivered by Mrs. Zoya Stepanyan, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the UN Office and other International Organisations in Geneva.

Thank you, Chairperson.

Armenia thanks the distinguished speakers for their insightful remarks that set the scene for this discussion.

Targeting minorities on social media is one of the most acute challenges that the international community faces these days. If twenty years ago a genocide could have been provoked through blaming a minority on radio and TV, in our days we witness incitement to this horrendous crime unfolding through the conduits of social networks.

It, however, can never happen without a tacit or direct participation of a Government. Armenia is gravely concerned that the high-level officials of Turkey commonly use such insults as the ‘Leftovers of the sword,’ referring to the Genocide of Armenians and other Christian communities. The leadership of Azerbaijan has adopted a similar derogatory stance occasionally calling Armenians “dogs who should be chased.” This happens in a country that alleges itself to have a multicultural society.

These kind of messages were not singular emotional outbursts but a constant motif of the Turkish and Azerbaijani Government’s policies, widely disseminated on social networks, including through numerous troll farms. Such concerted advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred is an early warning sign of organized and systematic violence to come, within and outside their countries, which we actually witnessed during the recent aggression of Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh.

Early detection and denouncement of egregious use of the hate speech can certainly contribute to the prevention of gross violations of human rights. The UN human rights pillar can play a key role in this regard.

Armenia further believes that private companies who manage social networks should exercise utmost vigilance in detecting and dismantling such heinous practices.

I thank you, Chairperson.