

15th session of the Forum on Minority Issues

1-2 December 2022

**Review. Rethink. Reform. 30th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Minority Rights
Review: Normative frameworks and the mainstreaming of the Declaration at the UN
Statement**

**by Mr. Anar Alizada, Senior Adviser of the Department of Humanitarian Policy,
Diaspora, Multiculturalism and Religious Affairs
of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1 December 2022**

Thank you Mr. Chair,

I would like to share with you the success that Azerbaijan has achieved in protecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. Representatives of various ethnic and religious groups have for centuries lived in Azerbaijan in the conditions of friendship and good neighbourliness. At the same time, Azerbaijan is one of the few countries where there has never been anti-Semitism.

The preservation and development of this diversity, the support of a tolerant and multicultural atmosphere in the country is one of the priorities of the policy of the Azerbaijani state. On September 16, 1992, a presidential decree was issued in Azerbaijan "On the protection of the rights and freedom of national minorities". This event occurred before the adoption of the UN declaration on the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities. It demonstrates that Azerbaijani Government attaches great importance to the protection of the rights of minorities.

The Azerbaijani state implements a wide range of programs to meet the national, cultural and religious needs of ethnic minorities. In 2014, by decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism was established in order to preserve and develop ethno-cultural diversity in the country. In Azerbaijan, in public schools located in areas densely populated by ethnic minorities, pupils from national minorities learn their mother tongue. All textbooks and teaching aids in this subject are published with funding from the state budget. The Azerbaijani state radio regularly broadcasts radio programs for national minorities in their own language. These programs are financed from the state budget too. National minorities are widely represented in the executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Every year, non-Muslim communities whose members are representatives of ethnic minorities receive significant state financial assistance. With the financial support of the Azerbaijani state, the restoration and construction of churches and synagogues is carried out in order to meet the religious needs of national minorities. For example, a synagogue of Mountain Jews was built in 2011 in the centre of the capital of Azerbaijan thanks to the financial support of the Azerbaijani state.

In conclusion, I would like to touch upon one important point regarding the Armenians living in Azerbaijan. The cultural heritage of Armenians is protected by the Azerbaijani state. Just to mention, in the very centre of the capital of Azerbaijan, there is an Armenian church, which was restored by the Azerbaijani state. Programs in the Armenian language are regularly broadcasted on the Azerbaijani state radio, and the Armenian language is taught at the Baku State University. Equal rights and freedom for Azerbaijani citizens of

Armenian origin are protected by the Constitution of Azerbaijan. Conversely, the traces of Azerbaijanis once lived in today's territory of Armenia are being erased by this country. The religious and cultural heritage of Azerbaijanis, including their cemeteries have been destroyed by Armenia of which driving force is ethnic hatred towards Azerbaijanis. Since the liberation of our territories under the illegal occupation of Armenia in late 2020, it has been revealed that the religious and cultural heritage of Azerbaijanis in those territories have faced with unprecedented brutality.

We deem it necessary to draw attention to such human rights violations and the UN human rights mechanisms should address such international law violations of Armenia.

Thank you for your attention.