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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Youth Parliament for SDG, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[5 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Safe return of Internally Displaced Persons to the regained land of Azerbaijan

The number of people living in internal displacement because of armed conflict and violence reached 48 million globally at the end of 2020. This is the highest number ever recorded and reflects the evolving nature of conflicts, which have become more complex, asymmetric and fragmented, often involving multiple States and non-State actors. These concerning trends and the growing pressure on humanitarian aid have made it clear that more has to be done to prevent crises and address the root causes and triggers of displacement.

The international community has been devoting increasing attention to the prevention of crises and their consequences, recognizing the interlinkages between peace, security, sustainable development and human rights, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and reports of the UN Secretary-General.

According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, internally displaced persons (also known as "IDPs") are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border."

Displaced persons suffer significantly higher rates of mortality than the general population. They also remain at high risk of physical attack, sexual assault and abduction, and frequently are deprived of adequate shelter, food and health services.

The overwhelming majority of internally displaced persons are women and children who are especially at risk of abuse of their basic rights. More often than refugees, the internally displaced tend to remain close to or become trapped in zones of conflict, caught in the cross-fire and at risk of being used as pawns, targets or human shields by the belligerents.

Azerbaijan's internally displaced situation

At the end of the last century, more than one million Azerbaijani were forced to live as refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of Armenia's policy of occupation and deportation. After being IDPs, people had to settle temporarily in camp sites, underground excavations, railway carriages, basements, schools, kindergartens, dormitories and other administrative buildings.

The Azerbaijani government addressing the social problems of IDPs as the top priority of the country, establishing a systematic solution mechanism to solve the IDPs problems in a good Azerbaijani model. They built 116 equipped settlements with the necessary technical infrastructure to improve the housing and living conditions of IDPs and more than 320,000 IDPs were relocated to residential areas. The state pays a single monthly allowance (food and utilities) to about 500,000 IDPs.

As an urgent response to the IDP's need after the 44 days war between Armenia and Azerbaijan complexes. The private sector built housing complexes to improve the housing conditions of the IDP's without the use of any state funds. About 5,000 internally displaced families temporarily settled in four complexes.

The Declaration signed on November 10, 2020 between the President of Azerbaijan, the President of the Russian Federation and the Prime Minister of Armenia laid the foundation for hundreds of thousands of Azeri compatriots to exercise their right to return to their homeland in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner.

On 24 November 2020, A Coordination Headquarters was established by presidential order to address the socio-economic, humanitarian, organizational and other urgent issues arising from the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration signed on 10 November, 2020. The headquarters includes the Interdepartmental Center and 17 working groups in economic, social, legal, energy, security areas to coordinate the activities.

Return- Reintegration and Sustainable Development

At present, Azerbaijan has a task – to ensure the restoration, sustainable development of the liberated territories, the return and reintegration of IDPs to their permanent residences. Undoubtedly, IDP life, which has lasted for almost thirty years, and the socio-economic changes that have taken place within the IDP community during this period, bring an objective complexity to the return process. A variety of important issues, such as de-mining, physical security of people, provision of housing, necessary infrastructure and services, documentation and sustainable employment opportunities, require serious planning, inter-agency coordination, and a comprehensive approach based on cooperation with citizens, the private sector and international organizations.

Surveys were conducted among IDPs to determine the basis of repatriation of the people. As a results of the surveys which based on the principle of sincerity, appropriate planning schemes are developed. Repatriation of the people is carried out based on the principles such as voluntariness, protection of social justice, as well as the restoration of property and ownership rights, taking into account the socio-demographic dynamics and ensuring the employment of the returning population as priority at the initial stage.

Large-scale destruction and purposeful land mining of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territories during the nearly 30-year occupation by Armenia have negatively affected the realization of the inalienable right of hundreds of thousands of IDPs to return to their homes in a safe and dignified manner.

Mining of rural and urban roads, courtyard entrances, cemeteries, including civilian infrastructure, not giving mine maps to Azerbaijan or deliberately providing incomplete information are aimed at preventing IDPs from returning to those areas and delaying the reconstruction process in the region. Armenia has mined a large amount of Azerbaijani lands, which it kept under occupation for almost 30 years, even non-military lands. Despite the agreement reached by the Declaration dated November 10, 2020, Armenia refuses to hand over the mine maps and schemes. Due to non-provision of mine maps after the end of the war, about 200 Azerbaijanis (two journalists) have died or been injured by landmines in the liberated territories until now. IDPs, who have been looking forward to seeing their homelands for 30 years, are among them.

Conclusion and recommendation:

An entire generation has been brought up in exile. Azerbaijan has said 70 percent of displaced people want to return to the Nagorno-Karabakh region, but it could take up to 10 years to fully clear the area of landmines and unexploded weaponry.

Large infrastructure projects are under way to connect the newly regained territories to the electricity mainframe and to transport links. The first returnees are set to be relocated to a purpose-built smart village in the district of Zangilan early 2022, with more reconstruction projects planned for completion soon.

Like all human beings, internally displaced persons enjoy human rights that are articulated by international human rights instruments and customary law. In situations of armed conflict, moreover, they enjoy the same rights as other civilians to the various protections provided by international humanitarian law.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, created in 1998, restate and compile existing international human rights and humanitarian law germane to the internally displaced and also attempt to clarify grey areas and gaps in the various instruments with regard to situations of particular interest to the internally displaced.

The Guiding Principles note that arbitrary displacement in the first instance is prohibited (Principles 5-7). Once persons have been displaced, they retain a broad range of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, including the right to basic humanitarian assistance (such as food, medicine, shelter), the right to be protected from physical violence, the right to education, freedom of movement and residence, political rights such as the right to participate in public affairs and the right to participate in economic activities (Principles 10-

23). Displaced persons also have the right to assistance from competent authorities in voluntary, dignified and safe return, resettlement or local integration, including help in recovering lost property and possessions. When restitution is not possible, the Guiding Principles call for compensation or just reparation (Principles 28-30).

The international community's role is complementary. No single agency or organization has been designated as the global lead on protection and assistance of internally displaced persons. Rather, all are called upon to cooperate with each other to help address these needs pursuant to the "collaborative approach.

Youth Parliament for SDG (YPSDG) is calling for more involvement of international experts, to determine the damage caused to the state and civilians as a result of acts of vandalism committed in the occupied territories for nearly 30 years.

We also call for more engagement from the international community recognizing the interlinkages between peace, security, sustainable development and human rights, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Despite much of the regained territories lying ruined due to either war or neglect, the promise of return for the long-term displaced goes beyond bricks and mortar: it is a chance to reconnect with forgotten childhood memories and to reclaim an identity.

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1. Norwegian Refugee Council and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021.
 2. Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 70/262, A/72/707-S/2018/43, A/70/709.
 3. The State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Affairs of Refugees and IDPs, 2021.