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Statement submitted by “Women and Modern World” Social Charitable Centre, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Azerbaijan has a history of taking steps to empower women; it was the first Islamic state to grant women political rights equal to men, and more recently issued a series of progressive laws on domestic violence, gender equality, anti-trafficking and the minimum age of marriage. The Azerbaijani Constitution provides for the right to equality and prohibits the restriction of rights and freedoms on the ground of gender, among others.

Despite policies protecting and empowering women that are on the books in Azerbaijan, troubling gender issues such as early marriage and gender-based violence remain, compounded by an underrepresentation of women in politics and business.

Our observations show that although women in our country have the same rights as men, the opportunities offered to men are not equally available to women. Although our women are involved in all spheres of society, politics and business, positive changes are taking place, but there is still much to be done. Especially in certain regions of the country.

The Azerbaijani government is taking serious steps to ensure gender equality. One can positively evaluate the steps taken over the past 10 years to ensure equality between men and women in the country. In Azerbaijan, women are successfully represented in various spheres of public life. State policy is also aimed at ensuring the principle of gender equality in society. The number of women candidates elected in the last municipal elections in Azerbaijan has increased. While the participation of women in municipal elections in 2004 was 4 per cent, the municipal elections held on 23 December 2019, for the first time in the history of Azerbaijan, saw a very high percentage increase.

The number of women on the list of candidates for the parliamentary elections this year has increased. In the parliaments of Azerbaijan, women make up 21 per cent of candidates, men – 79. In the sixth convocation of the parliament in Azerbaijan, the gender composition has changed little – 103 men and 22 women.

In recent years, Azerbaijan has pursued a successful policy of increasing women's decision-making and representation in positions, as well as balancing representation in the political, economic and social spheres: various decisions have been made in this direction. Despite the fact that Azerbaijani government performs the following points, this takes a lot of time and a lot of finances:

Involve women and women's organizations in the definition of essential services for priority public funding, and support women's participation in - infrastructure development planning and decision-making;

Analyze women's specific needs and constraints, and address these through gender-sensitive infrastructure programs and policies;

Design innovative gender-inclusive infrastructure projects to ensure women's security in all public spaces and on public transportation;

Presently, a war ensues and civilians are dying. As a result of the provocations of the Armenian Armed Forces, 27 were killed, 141 civilians of Azerbaijan - children, women and old people were injured. 13-year-old footballer Shahriyar Gurbanov (born in 2007), died as a result of shelling by the Armenian armed forces of his hometown of Naftalan, located 50 km from the conflict zone. 63 civilian objects and 376 residential buildings suffered serious damage. On September 27, 2020, at about 06:00, the armed forces of Armenia, having carried out large-scale provocations, subjected to intensive shelling of the positions of the Azerbaijani Army along the entire front

line and our settlements located in the front-line zone from large-caliber weapons, mortars and artillery installations of various caliber.

Karabakh became a "hot spot" in the late 1980s, and after the collapse of the USSR. As an NGO representative, I would like to note that Azerbaijan has been striving for a peaceful settlement of the conflict for almost 30 years. Our country was interested in resolving the conflict in the format of the OSCE Minsk Group, but Armenia has always demonstrated a destructive position.

The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict went down in history as one of the most tragic conflicts of the 21st century, with its consequences seriously affecting the fate of millions of Azerbaijanis. As a result of Armenia's aggression, more than one million Azerbaijanis became refugees and IDPs, while more than 20,000 Azerbaijanis were killed in military operations and over 50,000 became disabled. The fate of 3,889 Azerbaijanis, including 71 children, 267 women and 326 elderly people, who went missing as a result of the conflict, as well as 871 people taken prisoner and hostage, is unknown.

At the root of the conflict is the occupation of 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan by Armenia: Until this issue is resolved, the creeping war will continue.

1993, the UN Security Council adopted four Resolutions. These resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, which acts as the main guarantor of international peace and security regarding the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict laid a legal base for the political process to resolve the conflict based on the norms and principles of international law. All these resolutions condemn the occupation of the Azerbaijani lands and emphasize the inadmissibility of occupation of territories through the use of force, reaffirm the territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of Azerbaijan's borders, that Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan and demand immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

We strongly condemn the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani people, the vandalism against cultural and religious monuments perpetrated by Armenian armed formations and Armenian extremists in Karabakh and 7 adjacent regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan!

The 1994 ceasefire reduced the intensity of hostilities, but a full-fledged peace did not come. There are four UN Security Council resolutions of 1993 urging Armenia to immediately leave the occupied Azerbaijani territories and calling for an end to hostilities. The hostilities actually stopped in 1994, but Armenia never left. Thus, UN Security Council resolutions are the highest form of articulation of international law. Therefore, Armenia is today outside international law, and Azerbaijan has every right to return its occupied territories. Since September 27, the Armenian side, which has launched a new act of aggression, has purposefully targeted Azerbaijani civilians and civilian infrastructure, flagrantly violating the norms and principles of international law, including the Geneva Convention and its requirements.

Although the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and insecurity remain the main drivers of violations of human and women's rights, the added dimension of COVID-19 is exacerbating the ability of communities to cope. Restrictions on travel and movement of goods, quarantine measures and the corresponding economic fallout as a result of the pandemic are deepening the impact.

Our women's organizations will continue to be vigilant. We hope will Azerbaijan governments accountable for closing the implementation gap and finally achieving the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action. We will build on the strength of the women who have come before us, with the hope of sustaining our work for a better world for future generations.

However, the unfair cost of war does not allow Azerbaijani women to live the lives they deserve. Unfortunately the conflict with Armenia has been going on for the past 30 years, the occupation of 20 per cent of our lands and the problem of more than 1 million refugees in Azerbaijan hinder the unfortunately, this does not mean that the international community will react immediately to Armenia's actions. We have been witnesses for many times, that international community were closed their eyes to unlawful actions of Armenia in regards to Azerbaijan. The only right way in such a situation is to continue the peace enforcement operations of the Azerbaijani army to force Armenia to withdraw the occupying forces from the territories of Azerbaijan as required by the

Once again we call on the world community, The Commission on the Status of Women the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Human Rights Council and the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and UNESCO, the CIS to condemn the aggression of Armenia, force the aggressor to comply with 4 UN resolutions and leave the Azerbaijani lands.

We will build on the strength of the women who have come before us, with the hope of sustaining our work for a better world for future generations.
