

Submission by the Republic of Azerbaijan

to the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Internal Displacement

1. The key issues, problems or imperative which, as you see it, should be prioritized by the Panel in its analysis of the crisis of internal displacement today and how prevention, response at large and solutions can be effectively advanced.

Azerbaijan as a country suffering from internal displacement for almost 3 decades, attaches great importance to international humanitarian cooperation aimed at protection of and global assistance to IDPs. It is our conviction that international organizations and institutions should play a catalyst role in attracting the international attention to the issues related to IDP communities. In that sense, the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement established by the UN Secretary-General represents a rare opportunity for international community to address problems faced by IDPs, especially those in protracted displacement situations frustrated with the lack of settlement of conflicts and other root causes of their displacement throughout the globe. In this context, the Government of Azerbaijan encourages the Panel to mainly focus on advocating secure, voluntary and dignified return of IDPs to their homes, as well as to support return and temporary resettlement projects implemented by the governments.

Internal forced displacement in Azerbaijan became one of the consequences of the military aggression and occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding regions of Azerbaijan by Armenia and ethnic cleansing conducted in these territories in 1992-1993. The overall number of IDPs in Azerbaijan as a result of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is 651,458 persons. Additionally, there are more than 300,000 Azerbaijani refugees who fled Armenia and were subsequently granted citizenship of Azerbaijan. After the outbreak of the conflict, the IDPs and refugees in Azerbaijan were temporarily settled in 62 cities and districts across the country in more than 1,600 heavily populated settlements.

2. Across the objectives of prevention, response and solutions, how can national political will, responsibility and capacity be catalyzed and cultivated.

Active governmental involvement in countrywide processes with regard to IDPs together with early planning and prevention policies and international partnership can best serve to catalyze and cultivate national political will, responsibility and capacity, mobilizing efforts for addressing internal displacement.

The situation of displaced persons in Azerbaijan is notable for several reasons. The first is that in a country of a little over 10 million citizens (7 million during ur c ies

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Despite all abovementioned steps and actions taken by the Government of Azerbaijan together with its international partners, as well as local stakeholders, the experience of protracted displacement in conflict zones clearly proves that it is impossible to find a durable solution to forceful displacement in these situations only by addressing humanitarian consequences of the problem.

It should be noted that the UN Security Council Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 adopted in 1993 clearly indicated and condemned the occupation of the Azerbaijani lands and expressed grave concern at the displacement of large numbers of civilians in the Republic of Azerbaijan. These documents called for immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and requested the UN Secretary-General and relevant international agencies to assist displaced persons to return to their homes in security and dignity.

The European Court of Human Rights in its judgment *Chiragov and others v. Armenia* stressed that the ongoing negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group (i.e. the resolution process) do not provide a legal justification for the interference with the rights of Azerbaijani IDPs, and recalled

indicates the continued presence of Armenian and Armenian-backed troops in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan as a factor preventing return of Azerbaijani IDPs to their lands.

Despite the demands of international community, the return of IDPs to their homes is still impossible in Azerbaijan. However, since the beginning of the conflict there was also an example of a successful return to and rehabilitation in the liberated Jojug Marjanly village. This village in Jabrail region of the Republic of Azerbaijan had been occupied by Armenian armed forces in October 1993,

diminish the magnitude of the problem, but also reduce the burden for humanitarian organizations.

Therefore, together with humanitarian actions aimed at creating temporary solutions for internally displaced people and their livelihoods today, the prioritization should be given to addressing root causes of displacement across the globe, emphasizing return of displaced population to their homelands with a view to achieving durable solutions for them.