

**The 43rd General Assembly of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)
First Plenary Session, Statement as the Guest of the Host
Advancing Together for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient ASEAN
21 November 2022**

**Honorable President of the National Assembly of the
Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency, Mr. Heng
Samrin,**

**Honorable Secretary General of ASEAN Inter-
Parliamentary Assembly, Her Excellency, Ms. Nguyen
Tuong Van,**

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, on behalf of the parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I greet all parliamentary delegations attending the 43rd General Assembly of AIPA. I would like to thank His Excellency, Mr. Heng Samrin, for his invitation and his hospitality.

Honorable colleagues,

Azerbaijan attaches great importance to its relations with South-East Asian countries and aims to further deepen bilateral and multilateral cooperation with them.

We are convinced that enhancing ties with the parliamentarians of ASEAN Member States will add an important dimension to the already existing relations, will serve for the further strengthening of cooperation between our countries and people, and also contribute to peace, solidarity and sustainable development.

Honorable colleagues,

Located at the crossroads of East and West in the South Caucasus region, my country Azerbaijan has an ancient traditions of statehood. Based on this traditions, the people of Azerbaijan established the first democratic parliamentary republic in the Muslim East in 1918. The same year, ahead of most Western countries, Azerbaijan gave women the right to vote. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan Democratic Republic lasted only 23 months.

In 1991 Azerbaijan was able to restore its independence, which marked the beginning of a new era in the history of my country.

Azerbaijan pursues an independent policy based on the norms and principles of international law. Equality, mutual trust and beneficial cooperation are essential elements for development of bilateral and multilateral relations. Azerbaijan has been a reliable partner, contributing to energy security and implementing transportation projects that link East and West.

Azerbaijan is a country, where various religious and ethnic groups have coexisted together in an atmosphere of peace and friendship for centuries. Multiculturalism is a way of life for our people. Respect for different cultures, religions and races is an integral part of the moral values of the Azerbaijani people.

Honorable colleagues,

Being a responsible member of international community, Azerbaijan does its best to contribute to global peace, cooperation and development.

Today, Azerbaijan, through its initiatives on enhancing global solidarity on common challenges such as COVID-19, successfully chairs the Non-Aligned Movement, the second largest grouping of states worldwide.

Acknowledging importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation on a global scale, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, His Excellency, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, as the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, put forward the initiative to develop parliamentary dimension of the Movement. The Parliamentary Network of the NAM was inaugurated in Madrid in November 2021 and held its first Baku Conference in June this year in Azerbaijan. As the Chair of the Parliamentary Network of the NAM, I would like to state that the Parliamentary Network is ready to

contribute to common goals by actively engaging with other parliamentary organizations, including AIPA.

Honorable colleagues,

20 percent of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan were under the occupation of our neighbor Armenia for almost 30 years. Unfortunately, numerous resolutions and decisions on international organizations, including the UN Security Council, demanding withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijan's territories, were not implemented.

Armenia carried out ethnic cleansing in these territories that resulted in more than one million Azerbaijanis becoming refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. Almost 4 thousand citizens of Azerbaijan still remain missing in connection with the conflict.

During the years of occupation, Armenia deliberately destroyed all our cities and villages, vandalized all historical, cultural and religious sites of Azerbaijan. Once the biggest city in Karabakh, Aghdam city was destroyed to such an extent that it is called as "Hiroshima of Caucasus" by international experts.

In 2020, Azerbaijan restored its territorial integrity, norms of international law and historical justice. Now, we have started the large-scale restoration and reconstruction works in these territories. Liberated territories are declared a "green energy" zone. Smart cities and smart villages are being built. Infrastructure and transportation projects are being implemented. The opening of Zangezur corridor will greatly increase transport potential of the region. The first families of former IDP's have already started returning back to their homes.

However, there are serious impediments to this process. One of them is that Armenia has planted more than 1

million mines in these territories. Since the end of the Second Karabakh War two years ago, almost 270 Azerbaijanis have been killed or seriously injured as a result of mine explosions.

Despite being the victim of occupation, it is Azerbaijan that makes efforts to ensure long-term peace and stability in the region and has proposed to Armenia to normalize relations and sign a peace agreement on the basis of 5 principles of international law. However, Armenia shows a destructive position and makes contradictory statements that negatively impact this process. Armenia should refrain from such actions and take real steps to sign a peace agreement. Because this is the only way to ensure long-term peace and stability in the region.

Thank you for your attention.

