

Statement by H.E. Mr. Hussein Baghirov, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**23rd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, High Level Segment, 16 November 2017.
Hosted by UN Climate Change Secretariat in Bonn
(Presidency of the Republic of Fiji)**

Dear Chair,

Excellencies,

Heads of Delegations,

First of all, let me express my deep appreciation to our host – the Government of Germany and the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for excellent organization of the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

Almost 2 years ago, nations of the world gathered in Paris to reach the historic agreement to tackle climate change – the global consensus to reduce carbon emissions and set national economies on low-carbon path. Azerbaijan has ratified Paris Agreement in 2016 and commenced to fulfill obligations outlined in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) document.

Climate change represents an urgent threat to humanity and we all need to increase ambitions with more sensitive approaches towards climate change mitigation and adaptation in order to minimize threats.

Azerbaijan, as a developing country is not included in Annex I group under the Convention and has not taken any quantitative obligations in accordance with Kyoto Protocol. However, the country succeeded to reduce GHGs emissions by more than 650 million tons since the Kyoto process started. It was achieved despite the fact

that our economy has grown 3 times. This volume equals to the annual GHGs emission of developed large European country. It was not a part of a carbon trade process, but purely contribution of Azerbaijan to the global emission reduction efforts.

Our country is one of the few countries that was able to stop deforestation and achieved increase in reforestation. Over the past 15 years we increased the volume of reforestation activities by 2.5 times, tens millions of trees were planted. Namely due to active planting, we were able to increase the forest coverage from 11.4% to 12.5% of the total country territory. In the framework of immediate actions, after the adoption of the Paris Agreement 10 thousand hectares of new forests were planted.

Recent 2 years were also marked with launch of new large-scale agro-forests plantings (on many thousands hectares). It is a brand new initiative which will help to diversify national economy, lead to reduction of CO₂ emissions and increase comfort areas for the wildlife.

In terms of raising energy efficiency after adoption of the Paris Agreement, in 2015-2017 period, already five small hydro power stations with total capacity of 12 Megawatts were established.

The policy of gasification pursued in the country plays important role in terms of forest expansion and its conservation. As such, thanks to the large-scale gasification activities carried out over the past 5-6 years, more than 95% of country population has been supplied with natural gas. It has led to the facilitation in forest conservation with the practice of wood use almost equaling to zero. This factor plays a great role in reducing

pressures on the forests and thereby increasing the forest areas. It is important to note that mentioned mitigation activities were implemented by country's own resources.

Azerbaijan's Nationally Determined Contribution presents an ambitious commitment. Despite being a developing country, my country has chosen a low emission development path. To further contribute to global efforts to combat climate change, Azerbaijan targets the 35% reduction by 2030 in the level of greenhouse gas emissions.

Nevertheless, the ongoing military occupation of one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan, including its Nagorno-Karabakh region by Armenia and the existence of almost one million refugees and Internally Displaced People have created, inter alia, a serious environmental burden for my Government, threatens the post-2015 development agenda in the entire region and makes it difficult to address the challenges reflected in sustainable development agenda, including commitments related to climate change reflected in its NDC.

I would also like to recall that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change reaffirms that States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources.

Illegal occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia is a serious threat to the unique ecosystem of ancient Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Aforementioned illegal actions of Armenia have not only had serious negative impact on our capacity to address climate change challenges, including relevant mitigation and adaptation

targets, but they are also in grave contradiction with the Convention, as well as global temperature targets and universal goals and measures against climate change that we are all discussing here today at COP 23.

Therefore, along with the access to efficient international market-based mechanisms, the settlement of the conflict on the basis of the fundamental norms and principles of international law namely, respect for territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized frontiers of states, is a crucial precondition for meeting respective commitments.

Dear participants,

We recognize the importance of our commitments under the Paris Agreement - a contribution to global climate change efforts in all long-term development programmes as prior topic focusing on low-emission strategies. It means production of thermal, solar and wind based energy in combination with hydroenergy will reach 25% share of total energy production by 2030. Considering the fact that we are transforming from importer to the producer of solar panels, it sounds as very realistic target.

Again, let me sincerely thank the Secretariat of the Convention for organizing this event.

Thank you for your attention.