



Statement

by H.E. Mr. Edward NALBANDIAN
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at the General Debate
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Monsieur le Président,

Chaque année, la grande famille des nations se réunit afin de faire le bilan des acquis de l'Organisation et de réfléchir ensemble pour tenter d'apporter des réponses aux problèmes auxquels le monde est confronté, de faire le constat de ce qui Unit les Nations, mais aussi de ce qui les désunit encore.

Ainsi, depuis soixante-cinq ans, l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies exerce cette mission aussi difficile que noble qui résumait fort bien le premier orateur de la première séance de l'Assemblée Générale ce 10 janvier 1946 - *maintenir la paix et la sécurité, et créer par une coopération appropriée les conditions de stabilité et de bien-être nécessaires pour assurer entre les peuples des relations amicales et pacifiques, fondées sur le principe de l'égalité des droits des peuples et de leur droit à disposer d'eux-mêmes* ».

Depuis, l'Assemblée Générale a bien évolué. Le nombre de ces membres a presque quadruplé en passant de cinquante-et-un à cent-quatre-vingt-douze, de très importantes décisions ont été prises, des documents historiques ont été adoptés, des problèmes anciens ont cédé leur place à de nouveaux, et le champ de responsabilités de l'Assemblée s'est beaucoup élargi en s'ouvrant sur les nouveaux défis touchant la sécurité internationale, la non-prolifération, le désarmement, le respect des droits de l'homme, la pauvreté, le terrorisme, le réchauffement climatique, la crise financière et bien d'autres questions.

En bref, beaucoup de choses ont changé, y compris le siècle.

Néanmoins et en dépit des développements qui ont marqué les dernières décennies, la situation dans la région où l'Arménie est située, m'invite à revenir vers ce 10 janvier 1946, date si lointaine et pourtant si proche au regard des objectifs qui furent alors énoncés et qui demeurent, plus que jamais, les fondements de notre action.

Comment est-il possible de maintenir la paix, la sécurité et la stabilité quand on décuple les dépenses militaires, quand on menace régulièrement d'employer la force et de déclencher la guerre?

Comment peut-on assurer les relations amicales et pacifiques entre les peuples quand on propage de l'intolérance et de la haine, quand on impose le blocus et les frontières fermées?

Comment peut-on assurer le principe de l'égalité des droits des peuples et de leur droit à disposer d'eux-mêmes, quand on rejette ce principe fondamental du droit international, le droit des peuples à l'autodétermination?

Mr. President,

I would like to hereby touch upon the conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh.

The people of Nagorno-Karabakh exercised their right to self-determination two decades ago. They fought for their right to freedom, withstanding the brutal war unleashed by Azerbaijan that was suppressing them for 70 years and attempting to cleanse them from their ancestral home. For that purpose, it even resorted to the use of mercenaries closely linked to international terrorist organizations. The Nagorno-Karabakh people had to pursue their right to self-determination as they were being denied their right to existence.

The right of peoples to self-determination is a fundamental and indispensable right enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The advisory opinion adopted by the International Court of Justice in July, reaffirmed the wisdom of the founders of this organization that made sure that one of the fundamental principles for maintaining peace and security in the world, the right of peoples to self-determination, can not be underrated in any way compared with the other principles of international law.

Let us be realistic. One can not say each and every time that this is the last self-determination case. No one is able to stop the progress of history; otherwise there would not have been 192 member states in this organization, instead of 51 at the time of its foundation.

Mr. President,

The Nagorno-Karabakh peace process moves forward with the internationally mandated mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, which continue their persistent efforts aimed at the peaceful settlement of the conflict based on the fundamental principles of international law - non use of force or threat of force, equal rights and self-determination of peoples and territorial integrity.

On July 17th, in the margins of the OSCE Informal Ministerial Meeting in Almaty, the Minsk Group Co-Chairs issued a statement in which they reiterated that the proposed principles and elements have been conceived as an integrated whole, and any attempt to select some of them over others would make it impossible to achieve a balanced solution. Armenia fully shares this vision to continue the negotiations on that basis in search of a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Unfortunately, Azerbaijan rejects two of the three mentioned principles and is attempting to turn upside down not only the essence of the negotiation process, but also to distort the nature of the conflict in various international platforms, including in the UN General Assembly, as it happened here again about two weeks ago and two days ago. That country is attempting to mislead the international community, presenting the consequences of the conflict as its causes.

Unabated war rhetoric, increased violations of the ceasefire regime, and the unprecedented increase of the military budget by Azerbaijan only exacerbates the situation, raising concerns over the sustainability of the already fragile stability in the region. Azerbaijan continues to reject the proposals to sign an agreement on the non-use of force and threat of force, and the calls for the consolidation of the ceasefire. Thus, by its stance, Azerbaijan represents a threat to regional peace and security.

The money stemming from oil revenues are directed at funding new military adventures. We all know the results of such adventurism.

Azerbaijan should refrain from its continuous attempts to shift the settlement process to other than the Minsk Group formats and frameworks and it should refrain from provocative and bellicose statements and actions so that the negotiation process could proceed in a more constructive and effective course.

In an era when the protection and promotion of human rights are considered to be the underpinning concept for the civilized world, intolerance towards the values of civilization belonging to others, damaging or destroying cultural or religious heritage intentionally, consistently, repeatedly, must be condemned with the same resolve and determination as violence against people.

The destruction by Azerbaijanis, between 1998 and 2005 in Nakhichevan, of thousands of delicately carved cross stones by the Armenian masters, dating from the 9th to the 16th centuries, is a vivid manifestation of such crime.

Thousands of these giant medieval sculptures were bulldozed under the Azerbaijani government's watchful eyes and this area was turned into a military ground in a government sanctioned operation. The 16th International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) General Assembly resolution regretfully stated with regard to this vandalism: "this heritage that once enjoyed its worthy place among the treasures of the world's heritage can no longer be transmitted today to future generations."

Mr. President,

Armenia's initiative for the normalization of relations with Turkey without any preconditions was fully supported by the international community. Last year, after intensive negotiations, we achieved agreements and finally signed the Armenian-Turkish protocols. We made a confident investment in a durable rapprochement, while Turkey, unfortunately, backtracked from its commitments and not only refrained from the ratification of the signed protocols, but returned to its initial language of preconditions.

Consequently, up until now the Armenian-Turkish border continues to remain the only closed border in Europe. One needs to prove his good intentions in deeds and not just in words. Armenia is ready to move forward when Turkey will be once again prepared to normalise relations without any preconditions.

Mr. President,

While we discuss all avenues to create a more prosperous and protected world for our peoples, it would be remiss if we did not speak about the responsibility to protect. As a nation we survived the most heinous crime against humanity – genocide, 95 years ago. We attach utmost importance to the advancement of all international efforts aimed at prevention of genocide and crimes against humanity. It is encouraging that further discussions on the Secretary General’s report on “Early warning, assessment and the responsibility to protect” are undertaken within the General Assembly to come up with a formula that would allow us to act in a timely and coherent manner with the use of all United Nations system resources and capabilities for early warning, assessment and prevention of such situations that could lead to genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

To bolster the United Nations capacity to deal with the current challenges and those ahead, we need to enhance our efforts in furthering the UN reform process, in making more efficient and effective use of the existing resources, making the “One UN” policy work, and better utilizing the regional capacities to complement our global actions.

Today, the world evolves faster than ever. To meet security, political, economic, social, environmental and other challenges we simply have to put our efforts, resources, and political determination together to withstand them and push ahead the international development agenda.

Thank you.