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**STATEMENT
BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
AT THE OSCE CONFERENCE ON RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION
SESSION 2, VIENNA, SEPTEMBER 4, 2003**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Measures of prevention, education and protection aimed at eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are widely elaborated in all documents adopted during the Strasburg and Durban Conferences. In this regard my Delegation reiterates its position that the success of the fight against the manifestations of racism and related intolerances depends not only on legal, political and other measures undertaken currently by the international community, but also on its spiritual consolidation. Establishment of a spirit of greater mutual respect between cultures and religions is another important aspect of the problem of eradication of racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalist ideologies.

Supporting a trend towards continuing and deepening of a dialogue between civilizations, we would like to stress its multi-profile meaning. We think that implementation of programs in the fields of education, information and cultural dialogue will significantly facilitate mutual respect and tolerance, understanding and trust, which are in great demand for solution of common problems that we are facing.

Situated at the historical crossroads between East and West, Azerbaijan has absorbed the values of both civilizations. As a country where over many centuries tens of ethnic and religious groups peacefully coexist, Azerbaijan has used its historical experience and made its own contribution to inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and more than once has confirmed its adherence to this process.

The international Conference “On role of religion in a democratic society: searching for ways to combat terrorism and extremism” organized by the Government of Azerbaijan with support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in October 2002 in Baku serves as an obvious and bright example to it. The Final Document of the Conference reflects the importance of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue in the OSCE region for establishment of atmosphere of mutual trust and consolidation in the fight against extremism and intolerance.

Another event held this July in the capital of Azerbaijan with support of UNESCO has been the Conference of the GUUAM Group countries called “East-West intercultural dialogue: Europe-Caucasus-Asia cultural corridor”. The Conference discussed the cultural corridor project, which was put forward by Azerbaijan. The implementation of such a project based on a rich cultural, ethnic and religious palette of peoples inhabiting the three adjacent regions and comprising all kinds of cultural exchanges, would certainly contribute to further strengthening of mutual understanding and development of multifaceted relations among peoples. We invite all relevant international institutions to render necessary consultative and technical assistance to this project.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me stress once again that the OSCE as the only all-inclusive pan-European institution, has an important role to play in strengthening spirit of respect and trust among peoples of different nationalities and beliefs. I would like to confirm the readiness of Azerbaijan to contribute to this process.

Thank you.