

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Yashar Aliyev,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations,
at the 21st Annual Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs
of the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)
under the theme of “Accelerating implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the
aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and building momentum towards the Third United
Nations Conference on LLDCs”
(22 September 2022, UN HQ, New York)**

Mr. Chairman,

COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on development of LLDCs, and it hindered implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. In the post-COVID era we will need stronger solidarity and coordination to tackle our geographic vulnerabilities and improve self-resilience of LLDCs.

LLDCs need greater efforts to overcome challenges stemming from landlockedness, and deliver supply chains and mobility, as well as enhanced partnership with all stakeholders including transit countries, development partners and the private sector.

Recent geopolitical and economic challenges around the world significantly affect Eurasia's transportation landscape by changing the roles and positions of its participants. New realities necessitate the enhanced role of Azerbaijan as a regional hub. Located at the crossroads of North-South and East-West transport corridors, Azerbaijan is becoming a transit country with a strategically central place between Europe and China.

Seamless transport corridors are the backbone of development for landlocked countries. Today, corridors and routes passing through Azerbaijan offer competitive advantage for the transport operators and businesses in terms of high-end infrastructure and fast and secure transit traffic.

In the face of recent challenges within the global supply chains, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (or Middle Corridor), the shortest route between western part of China and the EU, is emerging, as a viable and safe alternative for traditional routes, connecting Türkiye to Central Asia and China via the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, the largest merchant fleet in the Caspian Sea and Baku International Sea Trade Port further expand the transport capabilities of our country. The transit cargo flow through Azerbaijan increased by almost 50% in the first 8 months of 2022. TRACECA predicts that in the status quo, container cargo transshipment through the territory of Azerbaijan will grow three to five times in 2022 compared to the previous year. Over the last 15 years, Azerbaijan has invested more than \$25 billion in transport infrastructure alone, hence critical infrastructure is already there to account for a sharp increase in the flow of transit cargo.

The economic transition stands high on our development agenda. Azerbaijan strives for transforming itself into one of the leading innovative countries to scale up implementation of national sustainable development and transformation goals through advanced technologies.

To this end, the Azerbaijan Affiliate of the Fourth Industrial Revolution Centers' Network of the World Economic Forum was established the last year as the first relevant center in our region. We launched Azerbaijan Digital Hub project to advance high-end ICT infrastructure and services.

Meanwhile, we have also raised our ambitions in climate action and sustainable energy transformation. Azerbaijan set a target to reduce the greenhouse gases by 40% and create a Net-Zero Emission Zone in the liberated territories by 2050. The liberated territories of Azerbaijan, which constitute 11.000 square km, were designated a "Green Energy Zone" by the President of Azerbaijan. All these efforts will contribute to the achievement of 2030 Agenda.

The end of the long-lasting conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and new geopolitical situation emerged after restoration of our territorial integrity, pave the way for renewed regional cooperation and sustainable development through normalization of relations. These developments create promising opportunities not only for Azerbaijan, but also for the whole region and well beyond to develop key trans-regional and regional initiatives, and attract FDIs.

We believe that opening of communications will be a significant factor of normalization and will play its positive role in building sustainable peace and stability in the region and beyond.

The emerging transport hub in our liberated territories and the Zangezur Corridor will be providing the shortest land route between China and the Southern Europe. As a new transport artery in Eurasia, the Zangezur Corridor will serve to several landlocked developing countries locating along this route, and thus, contribute to mitigating the specific development challenges facing these countries.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Azerbaijan remain committed to the Vienna Programme of Action and its Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation.

Thank you.