

UN, General Assembly, Resolution GA/10693, Sixty-second General Assembly Plenary 86th Meeting, 13 March 2008

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS RESOLUTION REAFFIRMING TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF AZERBAIJAN, DEMANDING WITHDRAWAL OF ALL ARMENIAN FORCES

Seriously concerned that the armed conflict in and around the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan continued to endanger international peace and security, the General Assembly today reaffirmed Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, expressing support for that country's internationally recognized borders and demanding the immediate withdrawal of all Armenian forces from all occupied territories there.

By a recorded vote of 39 in favour to 7 against (Angola, Armenia, France, India, Russian Federation, United States, Vanuatu), with 100 abstentions, the Assembly also reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Azerbaijani population to return to their homes, and reaffirmed that no State should recognize as lawful the situation resulting from the occupation of Azerbaijan's territories, or render assistance in maintaining that situation. (See annex for voting details.)

At the same time, the Assembly recognized the need to provide secure and equal conditions of life for Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in the Nagorny Karabakh region, which would allow an effective democratic system of self-governance to be built up in the region within Azerbaijan.

Introducing the draft resolution, the representative of Azerbaijan said he did not accept the argument that the text was unilateral and untimely. It had been prepared in accordance with international law and was impartial. It had been prompted by unfolding circumstances, both regionally and internationally, which had heightened concerns over the status of the settlement process. It was, therefore, apropos and timely.

Meanwhile, he said, Azerbaijan was gravely concerned and alarmed at the lack of clear proposals from France, the Russian Federation and the United States, the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, under whose auspices talks had begun in 1992. The co-chairs had expressed in words their support for the objective of liberation for all the occupied territories and the return of the Azerbaijani population to Nagorny Karabakh, but by their deeds, they were trying to belittle that common endeavour.

The co-chairs had no right to deviate from the principle of territorial integrity for the sake of their "notorious neutrality", he stressed. Neutrality was not a position; it was the lack of one. There could be no neutrality when the norms of international law were violated. Neutrality under such conditions meant total disregard for those norms. Four Security Council resolutions adopted in 1993 demanded the immediate withdrawal of the occupying forces from Azerbaijan, while the General Assembly's dispatch of a fact-finding mission to the territories in early 2005 had confirmed Armenian settlement there.

Several delegates, speaking in explanation of position before the vote, expressed support for the text and for Azerbaijan's just stance. They included the representative of Pakistan, who spoke on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), noting that the group had repeatedly called for the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from all the occupied territories, and for the peaceful resolution of the conflict on the basis of respect of territorial integrity and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders. OIC was deeply distressed by the plight of more than 1 million Azerbaijani displaced persons and refugees, and called for the creation of conditions for their safe return home.

Also speaking before the vote, the representative of the United States noted that the Minsk Group co-chairs had jointly proposed to the two sides last November a set of basic principles for the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The proposal comprised a balanced package of principles currently under negotiation. Today's resolution did not consider the proposal in its balanced entirety. Because of that selective approach, the three co-chairs must oppose that unilateral text, which threatened to undermine the peace process.

However, he reaffirmed the negotiators' support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and thus did not recognize the independence of Nagorny Karabakh. But, in light of serious clashes along the Line of Contact, which had occasioned loss of life, both sides must refrain from unilateral and excessive actions, whether at the negotiations table or in the field.

Calling the resolution a "wasted attempt" to predetermine the outcome of the peace talks, Armenia's representative said that was not how responsible members of the international community conducted the difficult but rewarding mission of bringing peace and stability to peoples and regions. The co-chairs had found that the text did not help the peace talks; so had Armenia. Refugees and territories had been created by an Azerbaijan that had "unleashed a savage war against people it claims to be its own citizens". Only when the initial cause was resolved would the fate of all the territories and refugees concerned be put right.

Others speaking before the vote were the representatives of Slovenia (on behalf of the European Union), France, Uganda, Ukraine, China and Turkey.

Speaking in explanation of position after the vote were the representatives of Indonesia, South Africa and Libya.

Azerbaijan's representative also spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

The General Assembly will meet again at a date and time to be announced.

Vote on Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan

The draft resolution on the situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (document A/62/L.42) was adopted by a recorded vote of 39 in favour to 7 against, with 100 abstentions, as follows:

In favour: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Colombia, Comoros, Djibouti, Gambia, Georgia, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Moldova, Morocco, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen.

Against: Angola, Armenia, France, India, Russian Federation, United States, Vanuatu.

Abstain: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zambia.

Absent: Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Iran, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Paraguay, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Syria, Tajikistan, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe.