STATEMENT

By Mr. Ogtay Ismayil-Zada, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN at the thematic discussion: “Regional disarmament and security” of the First Committee of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly New York, 21-22 October, 2009.

Mr. Chairman.

Azerbaijan joins other delegations in congratulating you on your election as a Chairman of the First Committee. We also congratulate other members of bureau on their well-deserved election.

The Republic of Azerbaijan attaches serious attention to joint efforts in addressing regional and global issues, with particular focus on regional security, combating terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ensuring energy security. We strongly advocate a region free from weapons of mass destruction.

The security of each State, and more broadly, the international and regional peace and security depends on whether States follow the norms and principles of international law and use them as a guiding tool for shaping their foreign and security policies. Unfortunately, unlawful use of force is still not removed from the context of international and regional relations. Today civilian populations are suffering in many places around the world due to the manifest failure of individual States to fulfill their most basic and compelling responsibilities. Armed conflicts, military aggression and foreign occupation involving the most serious international crimes, are only a few vivid examples from our recent history of the bitter consequences of noncompliance by individual States with the norms and principles of international law.
Mr. Chairman.

The regional disarmament and security play a vital role in establishing peace in conflict situations. Unfortunately, unresolved conflicts in many instances become a source of concentration of uncontrolled arms as well as provide fertile ground for transnational organized crime and other illegal activities.

The most vivid example of misconduct of the norms and principles of international law is almost two decades long and still unresolved Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which also stands out as a major threat to international and regional peace and security. As a result of the aggression conducted by Armenia almost one-fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan has been occupied, approximately 1 million Azerbaijani people has become internally displaced and refugees. The most serious international offenses, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, were committed in the course of this conflict.

Armenia intensively builds up its military presence and capability in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The available data indicates that since the occupation the numbers of unaccounted for and uncontrolled arms in these territories have consistently increased. According to our information, Armenia is hiding up to 316 tanks, 324 armored combat vehicles and 322 artillery systems in the occupied territories. These items of equipment must be counted against the maximum levels of Armenia’s holdings and it is obvious that it has exceeded its ceilings more than twice, thus seriously changing the military balance in the region in its favor.

As a consequence, great numbers of UTLEs are accumulated in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. These territories give Armenia an opportunity to use repair facilities and, moreover, to transfer and hide UTLEs from the CFE community. This endangers not only the national security of Azerbaijan, but also the stable development of the whole region.

Mr. Chairman.

Against this background, it is curious that the statements of Armenian officials are full of accusations towards Azerbaijan about its allegedly
militaristic intentions and armaments race. The Armenians are stirring hysteria about the rapid development of Azerbaijan.

Armenia also blames Azerbaijan for increasing its military budget and violation of arms limitation norms. At the same time, it omits to say that annual defense spending of Azerbaijan remains in line with overall budget increases, that Azerbaijan continues to spend a much smaller percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on the army than Armenia and that the size of the armed forces of Azerbaijan is proportional to its population, territory and length of borders and remains less than Armenia’s. The military budget of Armenia as a percentage of GDP consists of 3.86%, while Azerbaijan has 3.26%. Moreover, comparative analysis shows that in correlation to its population Armenia is much more militarized in terms of number of military personnel, as well quantity of armaments.

We understand the true reason of Armenia’s misinterpretation launched in all international forums. The purpose is to create a smokescreen of its intentions in the occupied territories and to win time.

Armenia also passes over in silence that the arms control mechanism is not effective in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and that it deploys, beyond international control, great number of armaments and ammunitions in these territories.

Mr. Chairman.

Despite the fact that Azerbaijan is in a state of war and its territories are under occupation, we are continuing to fulfill our commitments under the CFE Treaty. Azerbaijan has reduced and destroyed more than 150 treaty-limited armaments and equipment (TLEs) during the last five years in order to maintain conformity with the limits set by Tashkent Agreement.

The strategy of Azerbaijan is aimed at the liberation of the all occupied territories and thus restoration of the State’s territorial integrity, the return of forcibly displaced population to their homes, and the establishment of durable peace and stability in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, as well as in the entire South Caucasus.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.