



Ladies and gentlemen,

During the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh and its people last fall, the armed forces of Azerbaijan have been deliberately targeting civilian infrastructures, including schools, kindergartens, as well as Armenian cultural and religious heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh. As a result, more than 22.000 children of Nagorno-Karabakh have been deprived of their right to education.

Also, it has been almost a year since Armenia alerted the Director-General and the Member States of UNESCO on the severe threats to the Armenian cultural property located in the territories fallen under the control of Azerbaijan.

We are grateful to Madame Audrey Azoulay for her efforts to send an independent technical mission in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in line with the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of armed conflict.

Unfortunately, Azerbaijan continues to block the implementation of this mission. This obstructive attitude makes us fear the worst for the state of the Armenian cultural heritage under Azerbaijani control. Both during the military hostilities and after the establishment of the ceasefire, there have been numerous documented cases of deliberate destruction and acts of vandalism by the Azerbaijani armed forces against the Armenian cultural and religious heritage, and the most notorious example is the double precise drone strikes on the Holy Saviour Ghazanchetsots Cathedral of Shushi on October 8th, 2020.

Along with the physical destruction of Nagorno-Karabakh's religious and cultural heritage, we witness unacceptable cases of distortion of the identity and changing of the architectural appearance of the Armenian cultural and religious heritage on the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh currently under the control of Azerbaijan with more than 1.500 cultural property and 19.000 museum exhibits.

It is crucial to spearhead international efforts and act appropriately to prevent the Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh to share the tragic fate of 28.000 annihilated properties of the Armenian cultural heritage of Nakhijevan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of promoting a culture of peace, tolerance, mutual respect, and dialogue between cultures as an essential tool for bringing people together and promoting peaceful co-existence. It will enable us to achieve all of the Organization's priorities.

Thank you.

