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On May 3-4, an Azerbaijani delegation attended the 89th session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in Geneva. The delegation, whose composition was defined by an order of President Ilham Aliyev, was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov.

The session considered the seventh, eighth and ninth periodical reports of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

The reports were presented by Khalaf Khalafov. In his remarks, the Deputy FM said the elimination of racial discrimination was stipulated in Azerbaijan's national legislation. He highlighted the implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Protection of Human Rights and the Plan of Action on the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Khalaf Khalafov drew the audience's attention to Azerbaijan's measures – both at national and international levels – to develop religious tolerance and inter-ethnic relations in the country. The Deputy FM said that in accordance with an executive order of the Azerbaijani President, 2016 was declared a year of Multiculturalism with the aim of preserving the values of multiculturalism in the country.

During the session, CERD members hailed Azerbaijan's cooperation with the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, accomplishments in the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the country's legislation in this regard. They also applauded the national solidarity in Azerbaijan, the government's measures to strengthen the protection of women's rights, pardons, as well as the country's contribution to the fight against racism, development of multiculturalism and cultural diversity through hosting large-scale international sporting and cultural events. The committee members also hailed information on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which was provided by the Azerbaijani delegation.

Deputy Minister of Education Firudin Gurbanov responded to CERD members' questions on education, including education for refugees and IDPs, women's involvement in the education system and other issues.

Deputy Minister of Education Firudin Gurbanov also highlighted what had been done to prevent racial discrimination in Azerbaijan's education system and the government's attention to this sector. He said the right to get education and right to use one's mother tongue were stipulated in the country's legislation, Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and relevant articles of Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Deputy Minister said there were schools for national (ethnic) minorities in the country, and spoke of preparation of textbooks for them.

Firudin Gurbanov described Azerbaijan as a land of tolerance and multiculturalism. He drew the audience's attention to a series of events held under a plan of action for the Year of Multiculturalism, saying they included a drawing competition among pupils, seminars on inter-cultural communication skills and knowledge in secondary and vocational schools, "Azerbaijani multiculturalism" public lectures, regional quiz competitions among pupils.