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**Fourth Session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues
Guaranteeing the Rights of Minority Women
29-30th November 2011, Geneva**

**Statement by Khuraman Muradzade
World Azerbaijanis' Union**

Dear Chairperson,

Dear I, Khuraman Muradzade, the representative of the World Azerbaijanians' Union would like to thank you for giving me an opportunity to make a statement on behalf of the minority communities in Azerbaijan on the rights of minority women to education and social and political participation.

After obtaining independence in 1991 Azerbaijan became an independent country. For the last 20 years Azerbaijan has acceded to a number of international human rights treaties. Minorities in Azerbaijan constitute approximately 10% of the population, the largest groups being the Lezgins, Russians, Armenians and Talysh. Minorities in Azerbaijan mainly reside in rural regions.

In addition, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia in the 90's resulted in 20% of the territory being occupied and 1 million refugees from the occupied regions and 250,000 Azeri minority IDPs from Armenia. Many IDPs and refugees were settled in rural minority areas, meaning there are fewer resources for the regions to focus specifically on minority issues. A number of minorities have left Azerbaijan because of social pressures in rural areas, particularly because of high unemployment, with the country's economy focused on the capital Baku and oil exploitation. Forming family values therefore and new approaches to the modern life and globalization has therefore not been easy for minorities in Azerbaijan and the situation for minority women in mostly traditional communities is even more challenging.

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (Article 26), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28 and 29), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Article 10), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (Article 5), the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (Article 1, 3 and 4) all recognize the right on education. All of which are ratified by Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan as a State Party to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities since 2000 undertook to implement the provisions contained in this international treaty. Specifically, Azerbaijan acceded to CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) in 1995 and submits periodic reports to its monitoring committee. Azerbaijan also signed the optional Protocol to CEDAW against women which entered into force on February 16, 2001.

Considering the importance of the women and children issues in our society there was established the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs by Presidential Decree on January 14, 1998. Also a law "On Gender Equality" adopted by National Parliament (Milli Majlis) has been adopted. The women comprise 50,4 per cent of population there.

The Azerbaijan Government has also undertaken number of activities to ensure the universal obligatory free of charge education of all the citizens in Azerbaijan in the secondary schools.

There is also paragraph 2 of an Article 34 in the Constitution of Azerbaijan against a forced marriage. However in the rural areas of Azerbaijan, many girls from minority communities are deprived of the opportunity to finish even secondary school. Meaning minority girls have neither the economic means or social space to integrate into society. It is mainly the responsibility of parents, who do not allow their children to attend schools and force them to marry at such young ages, because they cannot carry the economic cost of their children and there are few economic opportunities for women from a minority background. Traditional patriarchal approaches to the upbringing of minority children in rural areas act as a barrier for the girls and women from minority groups to further integrate into the social, cultural and political life of our country. People in these communities lack awareness of the rights of women and minorities. Therefore, authorities do need have specific programmes to raise awareness of these right and target the needs of minority girls and women

I therefore support the adoption of recommendations 48 and 49 of the forum. I would also like to make the specific following recommendations.

- The government and the Azerbaijan state Committee on Women and Children's rights conduct a series of awareness raising programs for the parents of the minority girls in the rural areas to warn them about the future possible problems in the life of their children.
- The government should cooperate with experts from minority communities to develop specific and effective tools and instruments for defending the rights of girls and women in the minority groups living in rural areas of Azerbaijan.
- Specific attention in these programs should focus on the following education, choice of profession, escape of forced marriages, human trafficking and forced abortions of baby girls.

For further information, please follow the links below:

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/301/49/PDF/N9630149.pdf?OpenElement>

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/272/12/PDF/N0527212.pdf?OpenElement>

www.cimera.org/pdf/Minorities_in_Azerbaijan.pdf

<http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=1922>

The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan

http://www.azstat.org/statinfo/demographic/az/AP_1_3.xls

The Azerbaijan State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs

<http://www.scfwca.gov.az/>