Statement by H.E. Mr. Hussein Baghirov, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan

22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, High Level Segment, 16 November 2016
Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco

Dear Chair,

Excellencies,

Heads of Delegations,

First of all, let me express my deep appreciation to our host, the Kingdom of Morocco for organization of the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC.

Almost year ago, nations of the world gathered in Paris to reach an historic agreement to tackle climate change. It is a global consensus to reduce carbon emissions and set national economies on low-carbon path. It is my pleasure to inform you that Azerbaijan has already ratified Paris Agreement and commenced to fulfill obligations outlined in its INDC document.

Climate change represents an urgent threat to humanity and we all need to increase ambitions with more sensitive approaches towards climate change mitigation and adaptation in order to minimize threats.

Azerbaijan, as a developing country is not included in Annex 1 group under the Convention and has not taken any quantitative obligations in accordance with Kyoto Protocol. However, the country succeeded to reduce GHGs emissions by more than 600 million tons since the Kyoto process started. It was achieved despite the fact that our economy has grown 3 times. This volume equals

to the annual GHGs emission of well-developed large European countries. It was not a part of a carbon trade process, but purely contribution of Azerbaijan to the global emission reduction efforts.

Azerbaijan is one of the few countries that was able to stop deforestation and achieved increase in reforestation. Over the past 15 years we increased the volume of reforestation activities by 2.5 times, tens millions of trees were planted. Namely due to active planting, we were able to increase the forest coverage of the country from 11*A%* to 11.8%0.

The policy of gasification pursued in the country plays important role in terms of forest expansion and its conservation. As such, thanks to the large-scale gasification activities carried out over the past 5-6 years, up to 90% of country population has been supplied with natural gas. It has led to the facilitation in forest conservation with the practice of wood use almost equaling to zero. This factor plays a great role in reducing pressures on the forests and thereby increasing the forest areas. It is important to note that all these mitigation activities were implemented by country's own resources.

Our Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) presents an ambitious commitment. Despite being a developing country, Azerbaijan has chosen a low emission development path. To further contribute to global efforts to combat climate change, Azerbaijan targets the 35% reduction for 2030 in the level of greenhouse gas emissions.

Nevertheless, the ongoing military occupation of one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan, including its Nagorno-

Karabakh region by Armenia and the existence of almost one million refugees and Internally Displaced People have created, inter alia, a serious environmental burden for my Government, threatens the post-2015 development agenda in the entire region and makes it difficult to address the challenges reflected in my country's sustainable development agenda, including commitments related to climate change reflected in its INDC.

I would also like to recall that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change reaffirms that States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources.

Illegal occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia is a serious threat to the unique ecosystem of ancient Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Aforementioned illegal actions of Armenia have not only had serious negative impact on our capacity to address climate change challenges, including relevant mitigation and adaptation targets, but they are also in grave contradiction with the Convention, as well as global temperature targets and universal goals and measures against climate change that we are all discussing here today at COP 22.

Therefore, along with the access to efficient international market-based mechanisms, the settlement of the conflict on the basis of the fundamental norms and principles of international law namely, respect for territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized frontiers of states, is a crucial precondition to help Azerbaijan meet its respective commitments.

Dear participants,

We recognize the importance of post-2020 ambitions - a contribution to global climate change efforts in all long-term development programmes as prior topic focusing on low-emission strategies. It means production of thermal, solar and wind based energy in combination with hydroenergy will reach 25% share of total energy production by 2030. Taking into consideration the fact that we now became a producer but not an importer of solar panels, it sounds to me a very realistic goal.

Again, let me sincerely thank the Kingdom of Morocco for organizing this important event.

Thank you for your attention.