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**Statement by Mr. Tofiq F. Musayev  
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**at the general debate of the 2023 session of the Special Committee on the Charter of the  
United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization**

***21 February 2023***

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and assure you in our delegation's full support.

As one of the core principles of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of international disputes remains a key item on the agenda of the Committee.

States have a free choice as to the mechanisms of settling their disputes or resolving conflicts to reach satisfactory terms for their termination by themselves. The 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law makes it clear that in seeking an early and just settlement, the parties are to agree upon such peaceful means as they see appropriate to the circumstances and nature of the dispute.

It is obvious that the recourse to any of such means does not take place in a legal vacuum. As the landmark Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes promulgated, "States parties to a dispute shall continue to observe in their mutual relations their obligations under the fundamental principles of international law concerning the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, as well as other generally recognized principles and rules of contemporary international law".

Indeed, whatever the choice of States as to the mechanisms adopted for resolving their contentions, no peace settlement can be reached which is inconsistent with international law, particularly where peremptory norms are concerned, such as the obligation to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States. These foundational principles must be applied consistently, not selectively.

If the Charter of the United Nations and international law are to mean anything, then selectivity and double standards should simply have no place in issues relating to the maintenance of peace and security. If one is to be consistent in upholding universally accepted values, it is essential to take steps to inhibit any attempt to reject them and not to permit lawlessness.

However, the reality is not so encouraging. In many cases, if not all, the violators of international law seek cover up their unlawful claims and actions in international law itself, misinterpreting the commonly agreed norms and principles and misusing the means of dispute or conflict settlement as a shield for further consolidating illegality, prolonging impunity and delaying peace.

In some instances, the conduct of this kind is grounded in extreme forms of ethno-nationalism and accompanied by hate speech at the State level and within society, along with disinformation and the incitement to fragmentation, violence and extremism.

It is obvious, but perhaps should be repeated, that the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes cannot imply continuation and sustenance of situations created through the violation of international law, while circumscribing the rights and duties of States under the U.N. Charter.

Needless to say, claims and actions, under whatever pretext or disguise, which are incompatible with international law, are incapable of acquiring legitimacy. Therefore, the lawful exceptions prescribed in the Charter itself, one of which is the exercise of the right of self-defence, should not be overlooked.

Azerbaijan's experience of nearly thirty years of unlawful occupation of its territories by neighboring Armenia, numerous war crimes committed against our people, destruction and devastation of thousands of our cities, towns and villages and forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of our citizens is an illustration and reminder of the need to do much more to ensure respect for international law and prevent conflicts.

As a result of the counteroffensive operation undertaken and successfully accomplished by the armed forces of Azerbaijan in the fall of 2020, in the exercise of the right of self-defence, the territories of Azerbaijan were liberated from occupation, the enemy's military capability in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan was destroyed and Armenia was enforced to peace.

The end of aggression and occupation has become a triumph of justice and international law and underlined again the necessity of strict compliance by States with their international obligations.

Compliance with international law in all circumstances is crucial to any progress in settling disputes, preventing and resolving conflicts, restoring and maintaining peace, building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations, enhancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, protecting human security and promoting sustainable economic and social development.

Azerbaijan recognizes the contribution of the Special Committee to examining the issues related to the U.N. Charter and the strengthening of the role of the Organization with regard to the maintenance and consolidation of international peace and security, the development of cooperation among States and the promotion of international law.

We look forward to useful deliberations during this session of the Special Committee, including within the annual thematic debate under the agenda item on the peaceful settlement of disputes. We also expect that the Committee will conduct meaningful, constructive and result-oriented discussions on the proposals before it, with a view of their finalization.

Thank you.