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Statement by Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on the situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan

(New York, 22 September 2023) The Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, expressed her alarm over the recent military escalation by Azerbaijan, noted the reported ceasefire announced on 20 September and emphasized the importance of preventing further violence and of ensuring a durable peace in the region that protects the rights of all people.

“Military action can only contribute to escalate what is already a tense situation and to put the civilian population in the area at risk of violence, including risk of genocide and related atrocity crimes. All efforts need to be made to prevent violence and sustain peace,” the Special Adviser stressed.

Special Adviser Wairimu Nderitu reiterated her call for dialogue and peace, and the call to avoid any escalation of tension, made during her briefing to the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council on 4 July this year, and emphasized the impact of violence on innocent and vulnerable civilians. “Previous instances of military escalation in the region have had significant negative impact on civilian populations; and there have also been reports of civilian casualties from the recent escalation. The region has further seen frequent reports of hate and divisive narratives being used, fuelling tension. Violence and hatred reinforce each other. We must stop this vicious cycle and work to build a future in which hatred and division are no longer present. I urge all parties to promote constructive dialogue and negotiations in full respect of international humanitarian and human rights law.”

The Special Adviser also expressed concern that these developments are happening despite the recent progress in ensuring humanitarian assistance to the area, including through the Lachin corridor. The Special Adviser recalled the 22 February 2023 Order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which was reaffirmed by the Court on 6 July 2023, indicating provisional measures in the case concerning the Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v Azerbaijan). She also echoed calls made by the United Nations Secretary-General on 24 February and 3 August 2023, noting that decisions of the ICJ are binding on the Parties. The Special Adviser expressed the importance that they be fully implemented, including the Order to take all measures to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles, and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions. This message she had

previously reiterated, including at the 28 April 2023 event organized by the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations on *'Prevention of Atrocity Crimes in the Digital Era'*.

“The fact that some humanitarian assistance has been able to reach the population in the area constitutes a positive step which needs to be continued, in line with international humanitarian law. This was an important step forward which requires building upon. All people deserve to live a life free from hatred, insecurity, hunger, and conflict.

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