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Statement

delivered by Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva

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Thank you Mr. President,

Secretary-General Kituyi,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to finally see you all in person and in good health after such a long time. It has been and continues to be a challenging year for all of us. Our lives and lifestyles have been challenged as much as our economies. In the most brutal way, the pandemic has demonstrated our weaknesses and as we raise back it is important to remember that business as usual is no longer sustainable.

Although unfortunately the virus is not gone, we continuously learn to live with it. Most of our countries have started to re-open and while the pandemic has hit all of us without distinction, many developing countries due to their pre-existing conditions have fallen further behind and desperately need a hand to raise. The pandemic has further demonstrated that our economies and lives are interlinked and interdependent, which further requires us to assist others while also raising ourselves.

We are only a decade away from assessing the 2030 Agenda and how we hopefully succeeded or unfortunately failed it. It is now undeniable that the COVID19 pandemic has thrown all of us backwards on the progress that we have been fiercely working for and the results we have been collecting grain by grain. Although many will continue to rely on
assistance from developed countries the importance of the South-South cooperation should not be overlooked.

We all missed such in-person settings to conduct our meetings as we humans being social creatures enjoy the company of likeminded persons. However, it is now undeniable that our future is going to be more digitalized than we have previously imagined.

The alleviation of the aftermath of the pandemic should be approached in a complex manner and cover all aspects of our daily lives and today I would like to draw the attention to the importance of digitalization and bridging the existing digital divide.

UNCTAD’s 2019 Digital Economy Report stressed that “the expansion of the digital economy creates many new economic opportunities. Digital data can be used for development purposes and for solving societal problems, including those related to the SDGs”, while UNCTAD’s 2020 World Investment Report correctly suggests that the digitalization will play an important, if not detrimental role, in the alleviation of the aftermath of the ongoing pandemic. Yet, the pandemic has further revealed how far behind many are on digital uptake and that the gap between the connected and the unconnected is bigger than we used to think.

Already in 2008 during the previous global calamity – the global financial crisis – my Government initiated the establishment of the new platform to improve connectivity in Eurasian region. The Trans-Eurasian Information Superhighway Project (TASIM) is a major initiative aimed at improving connectivity in Eurasia and establishing new fiber-optic telecommunications transit routes between Europe and Asia. The project is supported by three UN resolutions and in addition to UN General Assembly and UN DESA, enjoys the support of the specialized UN bodies such as ITU, UNESCAP, UNECE and UNDP. The project also enjoys cooperation with major international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. The TASIM project envisages building a major new transit route from Frankfurt to Hong Kong; thus, connecting the biggest exchange point in Europe with the biggest exchange point in Asia. The transit route will pass through China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, to Germany. A redundancy northern route passing Russia, Ukraine and Poland is also considered. The consortium comprised of interested partners has been considering the implementation of the project and recently agreements have been signed with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on fiber-optic cable to be laid along the Caspian bottom. The agreements are important for the implementation of the project.

In light of the new and emerging global challenges we invite the Member States as well as UNCTAD to consider supporting and participating in such important regional initiatives.

Thank you.