Mr President,

With pride, honour and a sense of a duty, Armenia presents a draft resolution, entitled "International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime". This draft is presented on behalf of --- co-sponsors, to whom Armenia is deeply grateful. This draft is a result of intensive consultations among the membership, which have been concluded successfully to secure a full consensus on the text. We appreciate the engagement of the broad membership in the negotiations and the constructive spirit throughout the entire process. This resolution follows up on another one, initiated by Armenia and adopted by the Human Rights Council earlier in March. In its operative paragraph 22 the Human Rights Council recommended to the General Assembly to proclaim such International Day. I am glad that we intend to heed this proposal.

Mr President,

Millions of human lives have been lost as a result of the most horrendous crime - the crime of genocide that humankind has to its shame demonstrated ability to commit. In its pivotal paragraph - Operative Paragraph 1 - this draft proposes to proclaim 9 December as an International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims. It proposes a day for a collective reflection on millions of human faiths, human hopes and human aspirations shattered as a result of despicable brutality, violence and hatred.

On 9 December 1948 the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Decades of deep analyses of the phenomenon of this crime, its root causes and consequences, carried out by a remarkable lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, have resulted in empowering the international community with an important legal instrument to prevent and punish genocide. That in the subsequent decades since its adoption the international community encountered repeated occurrence of genocide, underscores the imperative of a continued forceful collective action to prevent this scourge.

Ironically, as early as in 1985, exactly 30 years ago, a United Nations Human Rights body, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, in a landmark document, known as the Whitaker report, initiated the idea of establishing an impartial international body concerned with preventing genocide. Shamefully, this and other recommendations of the report did not materialise at the time. The initiative fell on collective deaf ears because apparently the immediate pressures of the day deterred in-depth examination of the impending risks of repetition of genocide. Only less than ten years later the international community witnessed a renewed surge of genocide.

It took the international community a rather long time to reflect on what former Secretary General Kofi Annan termed "complicity with evil" before tangible, albeit perhaps still modest mechanisms have been put in place to prevent genocide. Together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Adviser of the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Joint Office he shares with the Special Adviser on Responsibility to Protect, take centre stage in the vast human rights protection system in the function of prevention of genocide. With a commendable effort, they have been alerting us to the critical priority of early warning and early action to deny potential perpetrators the commitment of this ultimate crime. Indeed, we must contribute heavily to changing the culture of the Organisation from that of reaction to one of prevention. We believe the International Day will serve an important platform for prevention by way of commemoration.

Mr President,

The memory of the victims of genocide should help us transcend our sorrow, compassion and collective guilt to determination to act together in order to free the world once and for all of this dehumanising crime. The United Nations, through its members and throughout the entire system must demonstrate its ability to lead towards this objective. Besides the tools and structures what it needs most is the will. "Never again" should be uttered only once and for all. To quote the Whitaker report, "it has been rightly said, that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it".

For the victims of our past inaction, the International Day will render dignity. The denial to millions of the sanctity of life is ultimate injustice. Justice denied haunts generations of survivors. We speak from experience. It shatters faith in accountability. It undermines the fight against impunity, as much as genuine reconciliation. Proclaiming an International Day of commemoration and dignity of the victims is an act of prevention. As ever, we bear collective responsibility for putting together the building blocks of a rigid system to prevent and deny capacity to future potential perpetrators of the crime of genocide. It would be the most appropriate way of paying tribute to the memories of its victims.

We call upon all member states to adopt this resolution by consensus.

Thank you.