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Prevention of armed conflict**Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte****Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the
peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories****Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples****Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and
related intolerance****Right of peoples to self-determination****Promotion and protection of human rights****The rule of law at the national and international levels****Security Council
Seventy-eighth year****Letter dated 22 November 2023 from the Permanent
Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the address by Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to participants at the international conference on “Decolonization: Women’s Empowerment and Development”, held on 21 November 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 31, 37, 55, 58, 69, 70, 71 and 83, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 22 November 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Address by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, to participants at the international conference on “Decolonization: Women’s Empowerment and Development”

21 November 2023

I extend my greetings on the occasion of the opening of the international conference on “Decolonization: Women’s Empowerment and Development”. It is gratifying that more than 40 representatives from 18 countries representing different continents are gathered in Baku again to condemn the policy of colonialism, which unfortunately continues in the 21st century, and convey facts about the situation of women in the territories under colonial rule to the international community, and carry out systematic and consistent work towards the elimination of colonialism.

Historically, the respect for women in Azerbaijan and the holding of women in high esteem have been one of the highest moral qualities of the Azerbaijani people. Azerbaijani women have contributed to resolving fateful issues in all periods of our history, to the freedom struggle of our people, and to the liberation of our lands from occupation by the Republic of Armenia.

As chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Republic of Azerbaijan has always attached great importance to issues relevant to humanity and carried out effective work towards eliminating the injustices faced by peoples worldwide. In this regard, our time demands to bring the issues of women and colonialism together and amplify the role of women in the decolonization process. Regrettably, in the 21st century, women are still being subjected to slavery and exploitation in colonies, meaning that they are deprived of fundamental human rights.

Azerbaijan is very concerned about the continuation of colonialism, especially the flagrant violation of the rights of women and children in colonies. France, which currently controls 13 overseas territories as its colonies and interferes in the internal affairs of its former colonies located on different continents worldwide, continues its neocolonialism policy despite the many years of demands from international organizations and peoples fighting for independence.

Most of the bloody crimes in the colonial history of humanity have been committed by France. France, which occupied dozens of countries in Africa, South-East Asia, the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, and Latin America, plundered their wealth and enslaved their people for many years, committing numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity. The French armed forces discriminated against their ethnic and religious affiliation and subjected hundreds of thousands of civilians to genocide. The slave trade, which France was actively engaged in, is one of the most shameful pages of humanity. Millions of Africans fell victim to the French slavery policy.

As chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, I have repeatedly provided listed facts of numerous crimes against humanity and atrocities committed by France in the occupied countries. Millions of innocent people in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mali, Djibouti, Nigeria, Chad, Senegal, Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, Central African Republic, Gabon, Togo, Cameroon, Vietnam, the Union of the Comoros, Haiti, and other countries, including women and children, were killed by France. France is also responsible for the massacre of more than 800,000 members of the Tutsi tribe in Rwanda in 1994.

Despite the declaration of independence of the archipelago, including Mayotte, in 1975 by the Union of the Comoros Islands and the UN General Assembly (GA) confirming the sovereignty of the Comoros state over the island of Mayotte, France continues to administer the island of Mayotte as its Department.

The UN General Assembly has adopted more than 20 resolutions and confirmed the sovereignty of Comoros over Mayotte island. The UN also condemned and considered invalid the referendums organized by the French government on the island of Mayotte in the Comoros archipelago. At the same time, it has rejected the organization of any other form of referendum or consultation by France on the Mayotte island of the Comoros archipelago and any foreign law legalizing the French colonization of the said island. In that resolution, the UN assessed the occupation of Mayotte island by France as a gross insult to the National Union of Comoros, which is a member of the UN. Despite numerous UN resolutions, France has continued to hold referendums on the island of Mayotte in flagrant violation of international law. Therefore, the results of the referendums are illegal.

In addition to the UN, the Executive Council of the African Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation have also adopted decisions regarding the Mayotte island belonging to the Comoros. Ignoring the calls of international organizations and the international community, France included Mayotte in its constitution in 2003. In 2011, Mayotte became the 101st department of France and, in 2014, the ultra-peripheral region of the European Union. The fact that Mayotte was given the name of the EU's outermost region is a recognition of Mayotte as a part of France.

Apparently, France, abusing its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and continuing to blatantly violate the norms and principles of international law, forcibly annexed the territory of another country to its territory. This is explicit occupation and annexation.

Centuries have passed, but the new shameful methods of French colonialism continue to this day because policies and mindsets have not changed. The peoples of the overseas territories gathered at this conference have been fighting for independence for many years. Unable to abandon the history of colonialism, France does not respect the freedom, aspirations, and rights of the peoples living in overseas communities and territories outside of Europe, in the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic oceans, and works hard to undermine the realization of those aspirations. Also, it continues to make gross interventions in the internal affairs of its former colonies on the African continent, which is an obstacle to achieving stability. The views expressed by politicians from overseas regions about French colonialism are truly terrifying.

France destabilizes not only its past and present colonies but also our region, the South Caucasus, by supporting separatist tendencies and separatists. By arming Armenia, it implements a militaristic policy, encourages revanchist forces in Armenia, and prepares the ground for the start of new wars in our region. At the same time, France abuses its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to carry out its biased and prejudiced policy, engages in geopolitical intrigues in various regions, and tries to use Western organizations as a means of pressure on other states.

France must implement the decisions of the International Court of Justice regarding the nuclear tests conducted in the Pacific Ocean and stop the practice of lecturing other countries.

We observe that racism and Islamophobia are growing in parallel with the tendencies of neocolonialism in France. Having to deal with such disturbing and dangerous trends at home, French authorities are trying to lecture other countries. The recent expulsion of French troops from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso showed yet

again that its ruthless neo-colonialist policies in Africa are doomed to failure. France, which should be ashamed of its history of colonialism rich in bloody crimes, instead of apologizing for the atrocities it has committed, talks about fictitious ethnic cleansing in other countries.

As chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, Azerbaijan supports the peoples fighting against colonialism and aiming to be free. Your participation at the Ministerial Meeting held in Baku as part of Azerbaijan's chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement on July 6 and October 20, 2023, at the UN headquarters in New York on September 22, and at this event in Baku dedicated to colonialism, its consequences and neocolonialism, which are of particular relevance to humanity, are evidence of Azerbaijan's support for this issue as chair of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Bringing the issue of fighting neocolonialism to the international community's attention through all possible platforms is crucial. In this regard, the activities of the 4th Committee of the UN General Assembly and the fight within international organizations should be stepped up. The role of women should be further enhanced, and their struggle on the path of decolonization should be strongly supported.

Today's conference is a favorable opportunity for discussing the challenges and opportunities on the global agenda in relation to colonialism, its ramifications, and the fight against neocolonialism. I believe that the discussions that will be held within the framework of the conference will contribute to the mobilization of joint efforts in the struggle against colonialism, to the promotion of new ideas and initiatives for the well-being of mankind, and to leaving a "world free from colonialism" for future generations.
