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**Security Council
Seventy-ninth year**

Letter dated 12 December 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Landmines and other explosive devices continue to affect many countries in conflict or post-conflict situations, posing a deadly threat to civilians, servicemen, peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel.

As is known, as a result of Armenia's armed aggression against Azerbaijan in the early 1990s, tens of thousands of people in my country were killed, hundreds of our cities, towns and villages were ruined, more than 700,000 Azerbaijanis were forced to leave their homes and a large portion of the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan was occupied and remained under occupation for almost 30 years, in gross violation of international law and Security Council resolutions [822 \(1993\)](#), [853 \(1993\)](#), [874 \(1993\)](#) and [884 \(1993\)](#).

The counteroffensive operation and the local counter-terrorism measures carried out by Azerbaijan in the fourth quarter of 2020 and in September of last year, respectively, put an end to the unlawful occupation of its territories and ensured the restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, in full accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Despite the end of the conflict and the progress achieved in advancing the peace agenda, the serious challenges remain and continue to impact civilians.



Azerbaijan is among the most heavily mine-contaminated countries in the world, with an estimated 1.5 million landmines and unknown number of other explosive devices planted in the territories of Azerbaijan when they were under occupation.

The minefields in Azerbaijan cover about 11,258 square kilometres of the country's total territory of 86,600 square kilometres. Approximately 14.2 per cent of this area (165,871.5 hectares of land) has been cleared, while only 3.6 per cent of all planted mines and other explosive devices have been detected and neutralized so far (that is, 54,430 mines and 104,940 other explosive devices, as of September 2024).

There is ample evidence showing that landmines and booby traps were placed in civilian areas and objects, far from the former front line, in places from which civilians were displaced and to which they are expected to return. Even cemeteries and cultural sites in the formerly occupied territories were mined to inflict maximum possible casualties.

As a consequence, 3,461 citizens of Azerbaijan have become mine victims, including 359 children and 38 women. At the same time, the number of post-conflict mine victims in the country has reached 382, of whom 70 lost their lives and 312 suffered horrific injuries, the majority of whom are civilians, including children and women.

The mine threat delays the essential reconstruction and development works in the territories liberated from occupation, hinders the safe return of internally displaced persons to their homes in these territories and complicates the search for some 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan who went missing during the conflict.

The extensive mine contamination also poses a serious obstacle to full-fledged implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this connection, Azerbaijan declared the humanitarian demining as the 18th National Sustainable Development Goal.

Armenia's claim that it has no obligation to provide information about the minefields is fundamentally wrong. First of all, indiscriminate use of mines is prohibited under international humanitarian law. Further, States using landmines are also under the obligation to record their placement¹ and, at the end of active hostilities, to remove or otherwise render them harmless to civilians, or facilitate their removal.²

Moreover, as the International Committee of the Red Cross explained, "[t]he use of booby-traps which are in any way attached to or associated with objects or persons entitled to special protection under international humanitarian law or with objects that are likely to attract civilians is prohibited."³ International law likewise obliges States not to impede the safe return of internally displaced persons to their homes.⁴

The failure to provide full information on the locations of landmines and other explosive devices after the end of the conflict also violates international human rights law, in particular the right to life and the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose residence, as well as the prohibition on discrimination.

¹ International Committee of the Red Cross, List of customary rules of international humanitarian law, rule 82, "Recording of the Placement of Landmines".

² Ibid., rule 83, "Removal or Neutralization of Landmines".

³ Ibid., rule 80, "Booby-Traps".

⁴ Ibid., rule 132, "Return of Displaced Persons".

Since the end of the conflict, mine action in Azerbaijan has gained notable national and international attention.

With extensive experience in humanitarian demining, the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan has become a competent and reliable demining organization, working diligently to clear the liberated territories of landmines and other explosive remnants of war, in collaboration with international partners.

Since 2022, Azerbaijan has hosted three annual international conferences on mine action jointly with the United Nations, which have evolved into one of the prominent global dialogue venues addressing the mine problem. All three conferences produced tangible outcome documents addressing a wide range of issues on humanitarian demining and sustainable development, the environmental impact of landmines and the imperative of international support in this context.

The third international conference, held this May, which aligned with Azerbaijan's presidency of the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, focused on the urgent need to address the environmental repercussions of landmine contamination. As one of the practical outcomes of the Conference, the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a statement of intent to establish the International Centre of Excellence and Training for Mine Action in the country.⁵

Furthermore, on the initiatives of Azerbaijan:

- The 15th meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict adopted a resolution entitled "Impact of landmines on cultural property";⁶
- The United Nations General Assembly, in its most recent resolution on "Missing persons", "expresse[d] concern at the impediments caused by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices ... to efforts on identifying the whereabouts of missing persons, and call[ed] upon States concerned to cooperate to facilitate the safe search for human remains and retrieval operations";⁷
- At its 19th Summit, the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Alignment Movement welcomed the proposal by Azerbaijan to establish a Non-Alignment Movement Contact Group for consultations and practical cooperation on humanitarian demining and related issues.⁸

Azerbaijan also attaches special importance to the gender aspect of the mine action. The very first female demining teams were recently established in Azerbaijan within the framework of the project jointly launched by the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, UNDP and the European Union.

The scale and magnitude of the landmine threat in Azerbaijan necessitate stronger solidarity, strengthened partnership, concerted efforts and urgent, continued and adequate international assistance for its humanitarian demining capability and activities.

⁵ See [A/78/908-S/2024/456](#).

⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) resolution 15 HCP 7, of 11 December 2023.

⁷ On the basis of draft resolution [A/C.3/79/L.35](#), 14 November 2024, para. 9.

⁸ See the Final Document of the 19th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, Kampala, the Republic of Uganda, 19–20 January 2024, para. 392.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 18, 32, 61, 69, 71, 84 and 98, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
