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Sustainable development

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Promotion and protection of human rights

General and complete disarmament

**Security Council
Seventy-ninth year**

Letter dated 10 June 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement by Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, addressed to the participants of the 3rd International Conference on Mine Action, on the theme “Mitigating the environmental impact of landmines: resource mobilization for a safe and green future”, jointly organized by the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations in Zangilan and Baku, Azerbaijan, on 30 and 31 May 2024, and the Conference’s final declaration (see annexes).

The Conference, which was attended by 224 representatives from 75 countries and 17 international organizations, discussed the effects of landmines and unexploded ordnance on the environment and human security and the practical aspects of reducing their impacts, international support in demining activities and other related issues.

As one of the practical outcomes of the Conference, the Mine Action Agency and the United Nations Development Programme signed a statement of intent to establish the International Centre of Excellence on Mine Action Training.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 18, 61, 67, 71 and 99, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex I to the letter dated 10 June 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

To the participants of the International Conference on the theme “Mitigating the environmental impact of landmines: resource mobilization for a safe and green future”

30 May 2024

I welcome you on the occasion of the opening of the International Conference on the theme “Mitigating the environmental impact of landmines: resource mobilization for a safe and green future”.

Today, mines and unexploded ordnance continue to remain an acute problem posing a threat to people’s security across many countries. Along with jeopardizing human life, the mines seriously challenge socioeconomic development, damage the environment and cultural heritage, hinder post-war recovery and development initiatives, and ultimately impede the Sustainable Development Goals, even decades after wars have ended.

While mine explosions pose a threat to people’s lives and put their very right to live into question, they also significantly damage the environment. Plastic waste resulting from an explosion entails environmental consequences by negatively impacting soil structure. Mines that remain unearthed for a long time can lead to hazardous chemical reactions. Soil not in use due to threat of mines is subjected to erosion and abrasion. Therefore, it is particularly significant that today’s Conference has been organized in the run-up to the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which Azerbaijan will host.

Azerbaijan is bearing the brunt of a 30-year long conflict and occupation of its lands by Armenia, suffering from a mine pollution problem, and stands among the most mine-polluted countries of the world. According to initial estimates, roughly 12 per cent of the country’s territory is polluted by 1.5 million mines and an unknown number of unexploded ordnance.

Since the end of the war in 2020, 361 of our citizens, mostly civilians, have fallen victim to mine explosion, resulting in 68 deaths and 293 severe injuries. Overall, since the beginning of Armenia’s aggression against Azerbaijan, over 3,400 of our citizens have suffered from mines, including 358 children and 38 women. The steady increase in the number of mine victims is associated with Armenia’s refusal to provide accurate maps of the mines it planted across Azerbaijan’s territory, and with the placing of booby traps along the roads, cemeteries and other civilian facilities located behind the former line of contact. From 2020 to 2023, new mine zones were created stretching up to 500 km, new mines were planted in Azerbaijan. Responsibility for that rests with Armenia.

Challenges we face in demining also hamper our development and recovery efforts, creating serious obstacles to the return of 800,000 formerly displaced persons.

Humanitarian demining is among the top priorities of Azerbaijan’s State policies, and the foundation of that was laid by the national leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev. Today, the primary body in charge of humanitarian demining in Azerbaijan is the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

So far, some 140,000 ha have been cleared of 119,946 mines and unexploded ordnance. Yet, mined areas stretch far beyond that. Mines are easy to plant, but mine clearance is a much more difficult and complex process. In a short span of time,

Azerbaijan has mobilized all its strength and is using the most advanced and cutting-edge technologies available worldwide. We are implementing measures to enhance efficiency in mine clearance, and our capabilities have significantly improved compared to previous years. All-women demining teams have also been deployed since last year.

Our country is implementing humanitarian demining at its own expense. Adequate political and practical support from the international community for mitigating humanitarian consequences of mines and demining the affected areas is of utmost significance.

While addressing its mine problem, Azerbaijan has simultaneously launched multiple initiatives to rivet the international community's attention to this matter. As you may know, last year our country officially declared humanitarian demining as the eighteenth national Sustainable Development Goal, and we are working to ensure the recognition of this issue as the United Nations global Sustainable Development Goal 18. In the meantime, Azerbaijan has launched an initiative to establish a special contact group on humanitarian demining within the Non-Aligned Movement. The contact group has been operating since last September.

At the fifteenth meeting of the States parties to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, held in 2023, a resolution entitled "The impact of mines on cultural heritage" was adopted upon Azerbaijan's initiative. As a follow-up to this momentous resolution, Azerbaijan hosted a special conference in Aghdam this May on the theme "The impact of mines and unexploded ordnance on cultural property".

In the past three years, our country has hosted a number of international conferences, in collaboration with the United Nations, dedicated to the subject of mines. Along with being leading platforms for the discussion of mine action matters, these events draw greater attention to this significant problem that troubles humanity in the modern era. Presently, Azerbaijan is working with the United Nations to establish a centre of excellence to provide education on mine action. A letter of intent is due to be signed between the Mine Action Agency and the United Nations Development Programme on the sidelines of this Conference. This notable development will allow Azerbaijan to share its expertise with the countries that face similar problems.

Today's event demonstrates Azerbaijan's determination to tackle the mine issue, one of the challenges of modern times. I believe that this Conference will contribute to addressing the problem of mines and their consequences, including the environmental impact, as well as to the exchange of advanced experience in the area of mine action.

I extend my best wishes to you and wish the Conference every success.

Ilham Aliyev
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Baku, 29 May 2024

Annex II to the letter dated 10 June 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

3rd International Conference on Mine Action, “Mine action on mitigating the environmental impact of landmines: resource mobilization for a safe and green future”, Azerbaijan, 30 and 31 May 2024

Declaration

We, the participants of the 3rd International Conference on Mine Action held on 30-31 May 2024 in Zangilan and Baku, Azerbaijan, have convened and deliberated on mitigating environmental impact of landmines and resource mobilization for a safe and green future. In this regard,

We,

Expressing deep concern with the devastating and indiscriminate impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) that continue to kill, maim, and traumatize civilians, including children, women, and other non-combatants;

Acknowledging that landmine contamination exerts an impact on the environment, making it critical to prevent and mitigate possible adverse impacts of landmine contamination through appropriate environmentally *responsible measures*;

Recognizant that climate change adversely affects efforts to mitigate explosive ordnance threats;

Sharing the principles and values of the existing international legal instruments that regulate or ban the use of landmines, cluster munitions, and other ERW, while encouraging all to take steps towards formal adherence to these instruments, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (“Ottawa Convention”) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (“Oslo Convention”);

Recalling the resolution No [2365 \(2017\)](#) of 30 June 2017 of the UN Security Council and all its previous resolutions on mine action;

Recalling also the resolution No [78/70](#) of 7 December 2023 of the UN General Assembly and all its previous resolutions on assistance in mine action,

Welcoming the UNESCO resolution titled “Impact of landmines on cultural property” adopted at the fifteenth meeting (2023) of the high contracting parties of the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict;

Taking note of the UN Secretary-General’s report titled “Assistance in Mine Action” No. [A/78/259](#), issued on 31 July 2023, in which the exacerbating nexus between landmine contamination and climate change was recognized;

Taking note of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy and the United Nations Policy on Victim Assistance in Mine Action;

Taking note of the International Mine Action Standard IMAS 07.13 “Environmental Management in Mine Action”;

Commending the previous International Conferences on Mine Action held in Azerbaijan in 2022 and 2023 and their outcome documents;

Expressing concern over the serious and lasting social and economic consequences of landmines and explosive remnants of war on the civilian population;

Stressing that mine action continues to be a valuable confidence-building measure in the peace-building process;

1. *Call for* the integration of environmental aspects of humanitarian demining into mine action efforts;

2. *Invite* all States and other stakeholders in a position to do so to support mine action in all of its pillars, most notably in mine victim assistance, demining and risk education by allocating adequate and appropriate resources, including technical, financial, and material assistance, training, and by promoting research and development on mine action techniques and technologies;

3. *Stress* the urgent need for comprehensive measures to prevent further casualties from landmines and ERW, and provide robust support for mine victims, including medical care, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society, and urge states and relevant organizations to allocate resources and expertise to these efforts;

4. *Call on* the United Nations climate conferences to recognize and address the environmental impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war by including mine action in discussions and policies on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, ensuring the integration of mine clearance and sustainable use following land release in national and international environmental strategies, and allocating resources for that area;

5. *Emphasize* the importance of mainstreaming mine action into Agenda 2030 process and *recommend* consideration of this issue at the Summit of the Future to be held later this year;

6. *Call on* States and relevant stakeholders to enhance cooperation through the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and technology; in this regard, we *welcome* the statement of intent signed between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to establish a Center of Excellence on Mine Action Training;

7. *Call upon* Member States of the UN to comply with their respective international obligations related to mine action, including those related to the exchange of information on the location of landmines;

8. *Call for* the continuation of the efforts of States and relevant organizations to support the establishment and development of national mine action capacities in countries in which mines and ERW constitute a serious threat to the civilian population, and an impediment to environment, food security, and broader social and economic development;

9. *Call on* affected states and relevant United Nations agencies and regional organizations and institutions and NGOs involved in mine action to proactively mainstream the environmental aspect of mine action to mobilize efforts and solutions to mitigate adverse impacts of landmine contamination and clearance and encourage the sustainable and environmentally responsible land use following clearance;

10. *Express* gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the generous support and excellent hospitality in conduct of this conference. We also express our solidarity with Azerbaijan – as well as with all mine-affected countries – in addressing their immense mine problem and call on the international community to support Azerbaijan’s humanitarian mine action efforts;

11. *Extend* our wishes for success to Azerbaijan in its presidency of the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29).