



# General Assembly Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
24 July 2024

Original: English

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**General Assembly****Seventy-eighth session**

Agenda items 9, 18, 31, 61, 71 and 83

**Report of the Economic and Social Council****Sustainable development****Prevention of armed conflict****Peacebuilding and sustaining peace****Promotion and protection of human rights****The rule of law at the national and international levels****Economic and Social Council****2024 session**

27 July 2023–24 July 2024

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**High-level segment on reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions: ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council**

**High-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council**

**Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development**

## **Letter dated 24 July 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I am writing in connection with the 2024 voluntary national review report of Armenia on the Sustainable Development Goals, which contains false allegations against my country and distorts the recent developments and the current situation in the region.

Such apparent insinuations and provocations have already become a tradition in Armenia's voluntary national review reports. Thus, its previous report of 2020 overtly promoted territorial claims against Azerbaijan by including a map in which part of the sovereign territory of my country, then under Armenia's military occupation, was depicted as the territory of Armenia, in clear contempt for international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>1</sup>

The situation since then has fundamentally changed. The counteroffensive operation and the local counter-terrorism measures carried out by Azerbaijan in the

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<sup>1</sup> See [A/74/946-S/2020/704](#) and [A/75/244-S/2020/925](#).



fall of 2020 and last September, respectively, put an end to the 30-year occupation of its territories.

The ongoing efforts to normalize relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity inspire hope for long-awaited sustainable and lasting peace and stability in the region. The Secretary-General and a number of international organizations and Governments welcomed the recent progress achieved as a result of direct negotiations between the two countries.

Against this background, it is extremely regrettable that Armenia has attempted to cast a shadow on these efforts and developments by once again abusing the reporting process on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to spread disinformation. It is evident that Armenia's allegations about the "large-scale aggression of Azerbaijan in 2020", "acts of aggression by Azerbaijan in 2021–2022", "10-month-long blockade", "ethnic cleansing" and "forced displacement" are totally false.

Armenia had almost three decades to put an end to its aggression and occupation through negotiations. However, Armenia refused to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council of 1993 (resolutions [822 \(1993\)](#), [853 \(1993\)](#), [874 \(1993\)](#) and [884 \(1993\)](#)), which demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and, instead, directed all its efforts at consolidating the occupation and colonizing these territories under the cover of the ceasefire and the peace process. The defeat of this policy was inevitable.

By the fall of 2020, when the hostilities resumed, the situation was indicative of the absence of other reasonable means of bringing the aggression and occupation to an end, rendering the use of force in self-defence the *ultima ratio*. As a result of the 44-day war, Azerbaijan liberated more than 300 cities, towns and villages from occupation.

Despite the end of the war, in the subsequent period, Armenia had continued to breach its international obligations by refusing to withdraw its remaining more than 10,000 heavily armed forces from the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan, further advancing territorial claims, inciting violent ethnic separatism in Azerbaijan and killing and maiming Azerbaijanis on their own sovereign territory.

Azerbaijan legitimately exercised its inherent right and responsibility to protect its people, defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and restore peace, the legal order and stability in the region. The common in all actions that Azerbaijan was compelled to take in response to Armenia's repeated unlawful use of force was their compliance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Azerbaijan fought not against a fictitious entity or civilian residents, as Armenia falsely claims, but against the regular armed forces of Armenia, as well as terrorist and mercenary groups under its command and control, deployed in the then-occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

While claiming the number of people killed during the 2020 war, Armenia, at the same time, neglects to clarify that these figures refer to the personnel of its armed forces. Indeed, according to official data from the Government of Armenia, losses among its military personnel amounted to about 4,000 killed, all of them on the territory of Azerbaijan.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, after the end of the counter-terrorism measures on 19 and 20 September 2023, which lasted less than 24 hours, thousands of Armenian

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, "Pashinyan says about 4,000 Armenian troops killed in Nagorno-Karabakh", 14 April 2021, available at <https://tass.com/world/1277921>.

servicemen and members of illegal armed formations who laid down arms were set free as a humanitarian gesture and allowed to leave the territory of Azerbaijan. As to the residents who decided to voluntarily relocate to Armenia and other countries, it was their choice, although Azerbaijan, by all available means, encouraged them to stay. In stark contrast to what Armenia asserted, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations mission to the region,<sup>3</sup> as well as local Armenians themselves,<sup>4</sup> attested that they had not been forced to leave by Azerbaijan.

Allegations to the contrary are outrageous also against the backdrop of Armenia's complete disregard for the rights of more than 250,000 Azerbaijani refugees who were forced to flee their homeland in that country in the early 1990s and are prevented from returning, as well as of over 700,000 Azerbaijani internally displaced persons, most of whom are still unable to return to their homes in the liberated territories because of the ravages of war and the serious threat caused by landmines and other explosive devices.

On another important note, the legal name of the area, to which Armenia's voluntary national review erroneously referred as "Nagorno-Karabakh" and which is now liberated from its occupation, is the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan. It is pertinent to stress in this regard that the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, including the recognition and use of geographical names established by legitimate and competent national authorities in relation to their sovereign territory, is an absolute imperative for the maintenance of peace, security and the legal order based on the universally recognized norms and principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Lasting peace and stability in the region and the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by Armenia require that it strictly comply with its international obligations and stop replicating false narratives that are counterproductive for the normalization process.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the objectives of a peaceful, secure, stable and prosperous region and will continue its efforts towards that end.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 9, 18, 31, 61, 71 and 83, and of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda items 5 (a), 6 and 18 (a).

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations, biweekly press briefing, statement by Kavita Belani, representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Armenia, 29 September 2023, see Letters dated 5 December 2023 and 8 February 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/78/636-S/2023/960 and A/78/764), with footnotes 10 and 4, respectively, which quoted the briefing from the source that was available at that time (<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1g/k1gvc8zwr>); United Nations, "UN team completes mission to Karabakh", 2 October 2023, available at <https://azerbaijan.un.org/en/248051-un-team-completes-mission-karabakh>.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, "Azerbaijanis offered Armenians to stay in Khojaly, Karabakh Armenian says", 29 November 2023, available at <https://caliber.az/en/post/207092/> (with reference to an Armenian YouTube channel, Oragir News).