



Twenty-First Meeting of the States Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Consideration of the general status and operation of the Convention Universalizing the Convention

Statement delivered by Mr. Kamal Hasanli Attaché of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Geneva, 23 November 2023

Mr. President,

Let me start by thanking you for all your efforts as the President of the 21st Meeting of the State Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and assure you of Azerbaijan's full support to your mandate.

I also congratulate the Kingdom of Cambodia on their Presidency of the 5th Review Conference.

1. As the result of former conflict Azerbaijan became one of the most landmine contaminated countries:

2.

- a. Total size of contaminated area is estimated - **Above 8000 Sq. km. or almost 10 percent of the country's territory.**
- b. During 30 years of occupation Armenian military has planted **estimated 1,500,000 landmines on this massive territory.**
- c. With rough distribution of 2 mine at every 5 sq. m. of contaminated area it puts Azerbaijan **as second to Bosnia and Herzegovina** most contaminated country of Europe and among the 1st dozen of the most contaminated countries in the world.

3. These lifeless statistical figures though claim an immensely tragic human toll:

- a. Number of casualties since 1991 is 3,416 including 357 children;
- b. But the most dramatic effect of Armenia's meticulous 3 decades long campaign of mine contamination is that they continue indiscriminate killing even after the end of conflict. Thus since November 2020 mine explosions happened at the liberated territories resulted in 337 casualties, of them 65 – killed and 272 seriously injured.

Mr. President,

1. The mine clearing operations are among the most difficult types of humanitarian disarmament actions. However, Armenia's refusal to provide accurate minefield maps adds even more to this complexity making it literally inch by inch search operation. Providing of such information is an obligation to the parties of the conflict, being even more so in post-conflict period. Unfortunately, the maps handed over by Armenia turned out to be only 25% accurate, making the clearance operation even more dangerous for demining teams.

2. That alone would have been huge enough complication even if the landmine planting had stopped after the end of conflict. But unfortunately it did not. The Armed Forces of Azerbaijan discovered more than thousand pieces of anti-personnel mines planted in only in Lachin district. The further investigation revealed that these were PMN-E type mines produced in Armenia in 2021. It is important to mention that The Landmine Monitor 2023 has added Armenia to its list of countries producing anti-personnel mines. Despite Armenia's denial, this very fact once again proves Azerbaijan's grounded claims against Armenia for transporting and implanting landmines to the territories of Azerbaijan since the end of 44 Days of War in 2020.

Mr. President,

Azerbaijan's active international involvement in the landmine issue extends beyond seeking assistance for its own substantial landmine problem. Azerbaijan firmly believes in the value of global collaboration in tackling this issue and has been sharing its own experiences in humanitarian demining and providing assistance to several countries facing similar challenges. Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) is the leading organization responsible for humanitarian demining in country. ANAMA has gained a unique experience by working in a challenging landmine environment while applying innovative approaches and solutions. While focusing on the current needs of Azerbaijan this experience offers much needed added-value and can be re-applied in humanitarian demining operations in other parts of the world where needed. We strongly believe our experience can help other countries facing similar challenges. So far ANAMA (Mine Action Agency) along with other demining operators has cleared more than 110 thousand ha from landmines and explosive remnants of war which constitutes around 10% of the overall threat areas. From November 2020 to 21 November 2023: total number of anti-personnel mines found: 30650; total number of anti-tank mines found: 18506; unexploded ordnance found: 59956.

Mr. President,

Azerbaijan is not a state party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention for the obvious reasons arising from our assessment that the military posture of neighbouring Armenia does not allow us to become a full-fledged party to the Convention. One more issue relating to this Convention is that it does not address the responsibility for mine clearance of contaminated territories. In our view, this responsibility should rest with the state which deployed the mines, especially if it deployed them on the territory of another state.

While we appreciate the political dialogue within this Convention, we see that this format has a specific objective. Azerbaijan initiated establishing the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group on Humanitarian Demining among mine-affected countries, which has a broad agenda. The first inaugural meeting at the ambassadorial level of NAM Contact Group for consultations and practical cooperation on humanitarian de-mining and related issues was convened on September 8, 2023 in New York. We consider that the process within the NAM and this format should complement and mutually reinforce each other.

Furthermore, for two consecutive years, namely in 2022 and 2023, Azerbaijan organized the International Humanitarian Demining Conference, also known as Baku Conference together with the United Nations. The next conference will be held the next spring. We look forward to the participation of all states around this table in the upcoming conference.

Azerbaijan is a bright example of how countries should take ownership of addressing its landmine problem. Azerbaijan has an effective landmine contamination strategy and the institution, as noted earlier, to carry out humanitarian demining operations in the country. We allocate huge amount of resources in order to tackle this humanitarian problem.

Despite huge resources allocated by Azerbaijan, demining operations still require more resources given the size of the contaminated areas. Azerbaijan urgently seeks broad international donor support both in terms of funds and provision of technical equipment required to continue its demining efforts in the liberated territories. We appreciate assistance provided by our partners as a sign of human solidarity. We believe that the United Nations and its specialized agencies could also play a role in mobilising international support for demining operations in Azerbaijan. Using this platform, we would like to call on all State Parties to support Azerbaijan's mine action efforts.

Let me conclude by saying that Azerbaijan is committed to working toward the vision of a world free of anti-personnel mines and stands ready to support international efforts contributing to this important goal.

Thank you.