



**Intersessional meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Matters relayed to the Mandate of the President
Universalization**

**Statement
delivered by Mr. Kamal Hasanli
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to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva**

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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.

As the world comes closer to 30th anniversary of Ottawa Convention we witness once again rise in use of this deadly armament. Mines are part of the worst consequences of war: they contaminate land and waters, making the return to normal life of the civilian population sometimes impossible. But their worst consequence is that they take lives and destroy destinies long after wars and conflicts are over.

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

- 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** most contaminated country of Europe and into the 1st dozen of the most contaminated countries in the world.

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

- a. Number of casualties since 1991 is 3,383 *including* 358 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 alone 179 incidents happened at the liberated territories resulted in 304 casualties, of them 57 – killed and 247 badly injured. 304 destroyed lives, 304 families with ruined destinies, shattered dreams and traumatized psychologies.

3. The effect of landmines contamination (unprecedented in Europe for the last 25 years) put immense stress on human development on much greater community and the country at large:

- a. Let's not forget – these territories have once been home to more than 700 thousand people who have been ethnically cleansed by Armenia and lived the life of "refugee in

your own country". One can imagine the desperation these people experience to return to their homes.

- b. However the complexity of clearing of such a shiere area impedes speedy return of former IDPs to their home, even if for brief visit. So far ANAMA (Mine Action Agency) along with other demining operators has cleared almost 83 thousand ha from landmines and explosive remnants of war which constitutes around 9.06% of the overall threat areas.

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 obligation to the parties of the conflict, being as much so in post conflict period. Unfortunately we found that the maps handed over by Armenia were 75 percent inaccurate, making the clearance operation even more dangerous for demining teams.

2. That alone would have been huge enough complication even if the landmine planting would stopped after the end of conflict. But unfortunately it has not. Last year while returning the liberated Lachin district to its once expelled residents, the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan discovered more than thousand pieces of anti-personnel mines planted in this border region alone from 15 to 22 August, 2022. The further investigation revealed that these were PMN-E type mines produced in Armenia in 2021.

Therefore any serious efforts to turn the region of South Caucasus into the mine free zone should start with parties to the former conflict complying with their obligation under international humanitarian law, exchanging correct information on land-mine fields which can also in itself be a CBM and contribution to sustainable peace.

- 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 already demonstrated its human solidarity by 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.

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.

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 highly appreciate assistance provided by Pakistan, Russia and Turkey, and thank the United Kingdom and United States that have also expressed their readiness to join the international demining efforts in Azerbaijan. We

believe that the United Nations and its specialized agencies such as UNMAS 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 a world free of anti-personnel mines by 2025 and stands ready to support international efforts contributing to this important goal.

Thank you.