



**Intersessional meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Thematic session – Mandate of the President**

**Statement
delivered by Mr. Seymur Mardaliyev
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan
to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva**

Geneva, 22 June 2021

Mr. President,

Let me start by congratulating you on your assumption as the President of the Nineteenth Meeting of the State Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and assure you of Azerbaijan's full support to your mandate.

Since its entry into force in 1999, the Ottawa Convention has made important contribution to addressing the humanitarian concerns caused by anti-personnel landmines. Azerbaijan endorses the purpose and objectives of the Convention and appreciates the humanitarian spirit reflected therein. Azerbaijan has always attached importance to humanitarian concerns arising from the use of anti-personnel landmines and has supported global efforts to resolve these concerns. Although not a State Party to the Convention, Azerbaijan has consistently voted in favour of resolutions on the implementation of the Ottawa Convention at the UN General Assembly proceeding from its principal position toward the indiscriminate danger landmines daily pose to people around the world, as well as importance for promoting the international humanitarian law.

Azerbaijan has established a solid national legislative basis and institutional mechanisms to manage and coordinate mine action activities in the country. Established in 1999 and restructured in 2021, the Azerbaijani National Mine Action Agency (ANAMA) has cleared 548 million square metres of lands destroying 810,000 mines and other explosive ordnances in Azerbaijan over the past 20 years. The agency also enjoys a strong international profile, it has played a key role in developing mine action capacity of several neighbouring countries and assisted in the transition of international operations to national management during the mine action program in Afghanistan.

It should be particularly emphasized that Azerbaijan is not engaged either in transfer, transportation, or in production of anti-personnel mines. Azerbaijan has also provided transparency reports under Article 7 of the Convention. Thus, Azerbaijan is practically fulfilling the provisions of the Convention and supports the need for stable international legal framework to combat the production and use of mines.

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.

It is well-known that Azerbaijan restored its territorial integrity and sovereignty over its internationally recognized territories in 2020. The Trilateral Statement signed by Azerbaijan,

Russia and Armenia on 10 November 2020, has put an end to almost three decade-long armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and set agreed parameters for durable peace in the region. We attach vital importance to full implementation of this Statement for normalization of inter-state relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Government of Azerbaijan has already embarked upon practical steps to eliminate harsh consequences of military occupation of its territories with a view to enable safe and dignified return of its displaced population to their places of origin.

Decades of the conflict have left those territories heavily contaminated by landmines and unexploded ordnances, which is a serious obstacle for the ongoing national rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. Since signing of the Trilateral Statement, more than 140 people were killed and injured as a result of mine explosions in the liberated territories.

Most recently, two Azerbaijani journalists and a municipality official have been killed in an anti-tank mine blast in the liberated Kəlbəcər district of Azerbaijan. It is of particular importance to underline that this explosion took place in the area from where the armed forces of Armenia were to withdraw under the Statement of 10 November, and there was no necessity to plant mines since the said area was not a military zone. The mine was planted by Armenia during its withdrawal from Kəlbəcər, in particularly during 10-day extension it had asked on allegedly humanitarian considerations, but in reality it abused Azerbaijan's extension. Most of the liberated territories of Azerbaijan, including even the cemeteries, historical sites and other civilian objects have been systematically and indiscriminately mined by Armenia.

Since the demining operations has started in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan, ANAMA has cleared about 3 thousand hectares of lands, destroying 9,211 explosive ordnances, 8,256 anti-personnel and 3,792 anti-tank mines.

Refusal by Armenia to release mined areas maps further complicates the situation on the ground and risks to increase casualties among the population. It took seven months after the Trilateral Statement that under the pressure from the United States and European Union and through the mediation of Georgia, Armenia has finally released maps of minefields containing 97,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines located just in one region out of seven that were occupied. The immediate release of information by Armenia on the location of remaining minefields is an absolute necessity to avoid further loss of innocent lives and to move forward towards a speedy post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Armenia's behaviour constitutes a clear violation of its obligations under international law and goes contrary to spirit and letter of the Ottawa 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.

Mr. President,

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.