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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Armenian Armed detachments violation at the liberated Azerbaijani lands

Azerbaijan is currently addressing the clearance of remnants of war with all the means at its disposal. The Nagorno-Karabakh has been mined heavily during its nearly 30-year-long occupation by Armenia since the early 1990s. During the counter-attack operations that lasted 44 days, Azerbaijani forces liberated over 300 settlements, including the cities of Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadli, and Shusha, from nearly 30-year-long illegal Armenian occupation. The war ended in a tripartite statement signed on November 10, 2020, by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Russian Federation. Under the statement, Armenia also returned the occupied Aghdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin districts to Azerbaijan.

Landmines are usually buried underground, and the majority are activated by pressure. often situated close to where families live and work. Children are especially oblivious to the risks associated with landmines due to their inquisitive nature and height measured from the ground up. De-mining is imperative for the preservation of their lives and that of their families. ANAMA specialists had to spend a long time cleaning the impenetrable trees that grew over the mines.

In addition to the buried mines, some of the minefields in the liberated Azerbaijani lands are believed to be laid by illegal Armenian armed detachments that are still deployed there. Some media reports claimed that the mines recently found in Saribaba were planted despite the presence of the Russian peacekeepers in the territory and the tripartite agreement that calls for the removal of Armenian armed formations.

The mines in the destroyed areas are planted since the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. After the war, more than 230 citizens became mines victims and other explosive ammunition, 135 of them are victims of incidents that took place outside the contact line. These areas are located near residential areas, far from the areas where intensive military operations were conducted. No information was provided about buried mine in the destroyed settlements, villages, water and canal areas, agricultural fields, orchards, and vineyards and other liberated territories.

After the end of the occupation, comprehensive efforts were made to prevent mass travel of people to these areas, but losses could not be prevented. 4 members of a family in Fuzuli district and 5 members of a family in Aghdam district became victims as a result of mine explosions while visiting their father's grave. The defense lines of the Armenian forces were discovered inside the destroyed cemeteries. It was determined that the front and rear parts of those defense lines were completely mined. Attempting to turn cemeteries and sacred places of people into areas where military operations were conducted, massive mining is enmity against humanity. 9,255 hectares of land were cleared and handed over during demining operations in the liberated territories from November 10, 2020 to August 15, 2022. As a result, 21,670 pieces of anti-personnel mines, 11,353 pieces of anti-tank mines and 31,731 pieces of unexploded ordnance were discovered, out of a total of 64,754 pieces and neutralized. Most of the discovered mines are Armenian-made PMN-3 and OZM-72 type mines according to the information provided by ANAMA.

Meanwhile, the illegally settled ethnic Armenians are expected to leave the Azerbaijani city of Lachin, where Russian peacekeepers are stationed, by August 25 under conditions of the tripartite agreement signed on November 10, 2020. The city and a highway traversing it will return under the control of Azerbaijan after the Azerbaijani government put into operation an all-new road to replace the Lachin corridor and enable an alternative route between the ethnic Armenian residents of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region and Armenia. Before leaving Lachin, the illegal settlers were seen setting houses and forests on fire in Lachin in unforeseen vandalism and ecological terror.

During the cleaning, ANAMA found a large number of cassette ammunitions and neutralized them. In 2021 alone, 397 pieces of LAR160, 9N235 and other banned cartridge ammunition dropped by the Armenian armed forces were detected and neutralized in an area of 10 square kilometers. On August 15, 2022, 991 PMN-3 type anti-personnel mines buried by illegal Armenian units in the north-west direction of Saribaba Heights in the eastern part of Lachin region were discovered and neutralized. Those areas are located far inland from the places called the contact line.

According to ANAMA information, the cassettes type of ammunition explosive devices is designed in a special shape, trap and homemade ammunition to make huge impact of explosion. The mines planting process like combining anti-personnel mines with high-explosive devices as a tool to increase impact and the scale of the explosion is a deliberate barbarity against humanity.

ANAMA announced that two civilians were killed in a surprise mine explosion in Shusha

ANAMA announces that two civilians were killed in a surprise mine explosion in Shusha - Two people - Khanatov Orkhan Norim oglu, born in 1999, and Gandiyev Vusal Firuddin oglu, born in 1993, were killed in a mine explosion in a non-demining area 1,300 meters from the village of Dashalti in Shusha. ANAMA told APA that the incident took place on December 9- 2022. The bodies of the two men were removed from the minefield by the agency's clean-up team and handed over to the relevant

According to preliminary investigations by (ANAMA), the incident occurred as a result of a surprise mine explosion buried by the Armenian. This type of surprise is another clear example of the terrorist intent of the Armenian side. In some places, 5-6 anti-personnel mines are found in one square meter according to ANAMA information.

Ecological and environmental profile

During the mine clearance, ANAMA experts come across unusual types of mines that attract attention. According to ANAMA specialists, the cleaning operations, which began in January 2021, are carried out mainly in the direction of the Aghdam and Fuzuli districts, villages, and settlements, as well as outside the drinking water basins: They indicate that Armenian used prohibited methods by placing small and interesting-looking mines around and inside the water pipes, which violated the norms of international humanitarian law, and showed its abominable nature during the mining of territories. ANAMA asks citizens not to touch such things while being in the area.

During the last 30-year of occupation, Azerbaijan witnessed a number of operations in river basins, forest massifs, along the banks of water channels. Mines and explosive devices discharged through the Tartar, Khachin, Gargar, Hekari rivers and it means that mines and unexploded ammunitions were discovered in the peripheral areas outside the war. Mines buried around the defense lines built on high hills in the liberated areas transported by rain and floods to the surrounding areas, or stay accumulated with the silty soil.

The destroyed villages in the liberated territories had more than 300 fresh water ponds during the occupation. These water sources were destroyed and contaminated with explosives. ANAMA witnessed such a bitter scene in the villages of Ashagi Abdürrahmanli of Fuzuli, Quyjak of Jabrayil, Garvand of Aghdam, etc.

The roads leading to the cultural-historical monuments are surrounded by mines and sometimes explosives set from traps. The explosives discovered during demining carried out around Fuzuli's Merdinli, Garvand piers, and the Shah Abbas caravanserai.

Conclusions:

The International Institute for Rights & Development – Geneva (IRDG) is expressing deep concern by the threat to the population posed by the cassettes type of ammunition explosive devices and landmines, unexploded ordnances and other explosive remnants of war left on the Azerbaijan territory. The delay of the international community to act on this issue is killing people and is a major impediment to world peace.

De-mining is one of the EU's "highest foreign policy priorities" and the UN strategy, linked to its 2030 Agenda and Environmental Strategy, which shows the importance dedicated to this humanitarian cause, which affects thousands of civilians each year across the EU's immediate Neighborhood. We call the EU and the international organizations, human rights organizations, and donors to stand together with Azerbaijan in the fight to support mine-free

Nagorno-Karabakh and safe return. Demining is a field of activity that requires lots of efforts and serious financial costs.

IRDG highlights the importance to bring all stakeholders such as governments, NGOs on landmine actions, opinion leaders, companies and citizens and partners to the table to resolve landmine problems, emphasizing that landmines can be planted according to the international specific procedures and only in contact and defense line with no harm to the environment, graveyard and residential areas which makes a real violation to the human rights. Azerbaijan cannot act alone to resolve this problem.

The mindset behind the UN strategy on de-mining is that mine action entails more than removing landmines from the ground. It includes efforts and civilian missions to train people, pass on best practices and render societies self-sufficient in the fight against anti-personnel mines. It also includes high-impact efforts to protect people and environment from danger by helping victims become self-sufficient through community capacity-building, inter-agency cooperation and proper training. We call upon the international community to engage in active collaboration and mutual support in training the people and advancing the resolution of the landmine problem in Azerbaijan.
