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**Prevention of armed conflict****Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte****Economic and other activities which affect the interests of  
the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories****Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of  
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples****Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia  
and related intolerance****Right of peoples to self-determination****Promotion and protection of human rights****The rule of law at the national and international levels****Security Council  
Seventy-eighth year****Letter dated 24 October 2023 from the Permanent  
Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the  
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the address by Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to the participants of the International Conference on the theme “Neocolonialism: human rights violations and injustice”, held on 20 October 2023, in Baku, Azerbaijan (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 31, 37, 55, 58, 69, 70, 71 and 83, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative



## **Annex to the letter dated 24 October 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

### **Address by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, to the participants of the International Conference on the theme “Neocolonialism: human rights violations and injustice”**

**20 October 2023**

I extend my greetings to you on the occasion of the opening of the International Conference on the theme “Neocolonialism: Human Rights Violations and Injustice”. It is gratifying that 14 countries representing different continents and the representatives of territories fighting for justice gathered in Baku to condemn the policy of colonialism that regrettably persists in the 21st century and to organize and conduct systematic and consistent efforts towards its eradication.

As you know, four years ago, on 25 October 2019, Azerbaijan assumed the Chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement with the unanimous support of its Members. The Non-Aligned Movement, which serves the cause of promoting universal values, is the second largest political institution after the UN General Assembly, bringing together 120 countries.

At the outset of Azerbaijan’s tenure as the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, I declared that my priorities and activity would be based on the historical Bandung Principles. The fight against colonialism was among the issues discussed during the Bandung Conference. The delegates to that conference affirmed that *“The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitations constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation. Colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end.”*

Azerbaijan is deeply concerned about the continuation of colonialism and the increasing tendencies of its emerging manifestations in the 21st century. Although nearly 70 years have passed since the Bandung Conference, there are some countries that still continue to pursue colonialism. One of such countries and the foremost is France.

Overall, most of the bloody crimes in the mankind history of colonialism were committed precisely by France. France, occupying dozens of countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America, plundering their resources and oppressing their peoples for many years, committed numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity. The French armed forces subjected hundreds of thousands of civilians to genocide on the grounds of their ethnic and religious affiliation.

Throughout 30 years in the 20th century, France had conducted nearly 200 nuclear tests in French Polynesia and 17 in Algeria. The severe consequences of these nuclear tests are still being experienced by the people of Polynesia and the Algerian people to this day. In line with the calls made by many organizations, it is imperative to assess the damage caused by the nuclear tests and France must pay appropriate reparations.

During the 132-year occupation of Algeria, more than 1.5 million people were killed by the state of France, which is why it is called “the country of 1.5 million martyrs”. The scale and geography of massacres committed by the French troops are so extensive that it is difficult to recount. Morocco, Tunisia, Mali, Djibouti, Nigeria,

Chad, Senegal, Vietnam, Comoros Islands, Haiti and others continue to grapple with the heavy consequences of that occupation to date.

A report titled “France, Rwanda and the Tutsi Genocide (1990–1994)” submitted to the French President on 26 March 2021 by the “Commission on the French Archives relating to Rwanda and the Genocide of the Tutsi” concluded that France bore substantial responsibility for the massacre of over 800 thousand of Tutsi tribe members.

France ranks among the leading countries globally in terms of the use of landmines. Over 5 million landmines were planted across Algeria alone. As a result, just like Azerbaijan, Algeria is among the top countries in the world suffering the most from mine explosions. Immediately behind France, its close ally – Armenia is the following on that list. In just three years, some 340 Azerbaijanis fell victim to the mines planted by Armenia across Azerbaijan’s formerly occupied territories. Among them are also civilians. One of the reasons that bind these two countries so closely is their practice of resorting to mine terrorism.

Eighteen thousand skulls of the fighters murdered throughout the colonial wars of the 19th century are kept and displayed at the Paris Museum of Mankind. The skulls of Algerian fighters are among the others on display. France is yet to comply with Algeria’s demand to return those skulls. Such thinking can be found in very few countries in the 21st century.

Although centuries have passed, the disgraceful new methods of French colonialism persist due to the unchanging mindset. The people of the overseas territories gathered at this Conference have been fighting for independence for many years. Unable to abandon its colonialism history, France disregards the aspirations and the rights of the people living in the overseas communities and territories outside Europe, in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, and works hard to prevent the realization of these aspirations.

The social situation in French Guiana is gradually deteriorating; nearly half of the population is on the edge of poverty, and the unemployment rate is rising yearly. Its natural resources are plundered, and 90% of the land is owned by France.

Martinique and Guadeloupe are facing two significant disasters. The indigenous population is subjected to assimilation through clandestine and illegal settlement. The past use of the chlordecone pesticide had poisoned natural ecosystems and the population, and the local residents are still experiencing its oncological ramifications.

France refuses to recognize the sovereignty of the Union of the Comoros over the Island of Mayotte. In its documents, the Non-Aligned Movement has consistently affirmed the unequivocal sovereignty of the Union of the Comoros over the Island of Mayotte.

In New Caledonia, a referendum is held without the participation of half of its population, thus depriving the right of the people of New Caledonia to independence.

France, which rejects the concept of ethnic minorities, prohibits the Corsican language. The UN assessed that as discrimination and a violation of international law. France, pursuing the policy of hypocrisy and double standards, is simultaneously attempting to position itself as a defender of national minorities in our region.

We observe widespread racism and Islamophobia across France, along with neocolonialism trends. Some people represented here today have been subjected to various forms of oppression, discrimination, and racist attacks. The French authorities, who have yet to confront alarming and dangerous trends at home, try to lecture other countries and interfere in their domestic affairs.

The recent withdrawal of French troops from Mali, Niger and Burkina-Faso has demonstrated once again that its merciless neocolonialism policy is doomed to failure in Africa. France, which should be ashamed of its history of colonialism abundant with bloody crimes, instead of apologizing for the atrocities it has committed, talks about fictitious ethnic cleansing in other countries. This country abuses its status of a permanent member of the UN Security Council in order to pursue biased and non-objective policies and engages in geopolitical intrigues in various regions.

As the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, Azerbaijan supports the peoples who fight colonialism and aim to free themselves. Your participation in the Ministerial Meeting in Baku on 6 July 2023, in the framework of Azerbaijan's Chairmanship in the Non-Aligned Movement, then at the UN General Assembly Headquarters in New York on 22 September, and today again in Baku, at an event dedicated to the fight against colonialism, its consequences and neocolonialism, which is of special relevance for mankind, is a vivid manifestation of Azerbaijan's support for that cause as the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement.

It is extremely important to bring the issue of fighting neocolonialism to the attention of the international community through all possible platforms. In that regard, the activity of the Fourth Committee (Political and Decolonization) of the UN General Assembly should be further revitalized.

Today's Conference is a favorable opportunity to address the challenges and opportunities on the global agenda regarding colonialism, its ramifications and the fight against neocolonialism. I believe that the discussions at this Conference will contribute to mobilizing collective efforts in the fight against colonialism and producing new ideas and initiatives aimed at ensuring the prosperity of mankind and leaving the new a "colonialism-free world" to future generations.

Ilham Aliyev  
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan