

Opening of the 2018 intersessional meetings

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President of the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties

7 June 2018

Excellencies, dear friends,

It is my pleasure to see many of you gathered here today in Geneva for this year's intersessional meetings. I understand that many of you had the opportunity to start your engagement with the Committees during bilateral meetings yesterday. Given the short length of the intersessional meetings I am sure that doing so relieved some of the pressure.

Dear friends, Last year, we celebrated the Convention's 20th anniversary and in this respect the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties was a demonstration of our continued commitment to the Convention and its objectives 20 years on.

I would not like to start these meetings without thanking my predecessor, Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi of Austria who spared no effort to take the Convention forward last year and presided over a successful 16th Meeting. I feel honoured that the responsibility of presiding over the Convention has been

passed on to Afghanistan and that I can be here with you today.

During the 16MSP, we were pleased to hear many States Parties and organisations, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary, paying tribute to the Convention and its vision and committing to continue working in partnership to make the objectives of the Convention a reality, objectives which are reachable and tangible.

During the 16MSP, we listened to the conclusions of the Committees and the updates from the States Parties as well as civil society which documented that we have accomplished a great deal in living up to our *Maputo Action Plan* commitments, in particular:

- We heard the progress made by many States Parties in the implementation of their mine clearance obligations under Article 5 of the Convention. One State Party – Algeria- formally declared that it had successfully concluded decades of mine clearance efforts.
- We learned of the continued efforts of States Parties to complete the destruction of their stockpiled anti-personnel mines with one State Party – Belarus – formally declaring completion at the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties.
- We learned about the efforts of the States Parties in providing support to mine victims with laws passed and frameworks put in place to better respond to the needs

of mine victims in their communities and therefore to all persons with disabilities.

- Just a few days before the 16th Meeting of the States Parties, we welcomed the announcement that Sri Lanka joined the Convention. Following the 16MSP, another state, the State of Palestine, acceded to the Convention. With these 2 new States on board, the Convention has now 164 States Parties. We also heard from States not party on concrete steps towards accession to the Convention by, for example, halting the use of mines.

These are just some highlights of our progress.

However, with this progress, we also have a number of challenges that warrant our continued attention:

- A number of States Parties have significant challenges to overcome in implementing their mine clearance commitments including challenges related to security and financing. We have also, unfortunately, witnessed the widespread use of anti-personnel mines in current conflicts.
- Today a number of States Parties find themselves facing challenges associated with improvised anti-personnel mines having been extensively employed in areas under their jurisdiction or control. A matter which lies clearly within the framework of the Convention.
- We must address the challenge of measuring the impact of our victim assistance efforts and ensuring that our

efforts are leading towards a sustainable framework for supporting mine victims without losing sight of the immediate support required by mine victims.

- 33 States remain outside this Convention. We must continue to encourage these States to make meaningful steps towards adhering to the Convention leading to their eventual accession / ratification of the Convention. Some of these States already participate regularly in the work of the Convention and we must work to encourage that more will do so in the future.

In less than 18 months, we will gather for the Fourth Review Conference, an event taking place every 5 years, at which time the *Maputo Action Plan* will have run its course.

Therefore, we should use this week's intersessional meetings do two things:

First, let us focus with even greater intensity on those Maputo actions which have proven challenging to implement, they deserve some of our greatest attention.

And second, let us use this week's meetings to begin to look forward, to initiate thinking on matters that we will need to consider at the Fourth Review Conference and beyond.

We will have to take stock of our progress and our remaining challenges and decide how we organise our work for the next five years while not losing sight of our 2025 commitment.

Above all, we must focus on implementation and on continuing to make this Convention a success for the landmine survivors, the mine affected communities and those whom have worked and continue to work tirelessly for a mine-free world.

Our Committees are best placed to monitor progress and through activities such as the individualized approach established by the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance, we have the means to look closely at specific States and see how together we can collaborate and encourage each other to meet our common objectives.

At the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties we will have an opportunity to assess our latest efforts in implementing the *Maputo Action Plan* and start planning our next steps.

20 years on, we must not lose sight of how far we have come or lose the stamina to fulfil our commitments. We must work to ensure the continued compliance with the Convention's obligations and stay true to the Convention's vision. Through our determination and work, we have obtained many successes and the challenges that we have encountered have so far been overcome in a cooperative manner.

Today we are experiencing a number of conflicts around the globe where anti-personnel mines are being employed and we therefore need to ensure that our Convention remains a

strong framework to address the scourge of anti-personnel mines and that we do not compromise with the norm the Convention has established.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committees for their work and excellent preparations in the lead-up to the intersessional meetings as well as to Australia for its role as Sponsorship Coordinator. I would also like to thank the ISU for its support to both the Coordinating Committee as a whole and to individual Committees and myself as President.

During these two days, we will turn our attention to the work of the Committee on Victim Assistance, the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance and the Committee on Cooperative Compliance.

Tomorrow morning we will have a panel discussion chaired by Switzerland, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation. The panel discussion will focus on the implementation of Article 5 and will include representatives of two mine-affected States Parties and the ISU as panellists.

This discussion will give us an opportunity to be reminded of what the implementation of Article 5 means. A clear and unambiguous understanding of this article is critical to the integrity of the Convention.

Tomorrow we will also have the opportunity to present to you our plans for the Seventeenth Meeting of the States

Parties. You will have received with the package of documents a draft agenda and programme of work for the 17th Meeting of the States Parties.

Also tomorrow, we will look at dates for next year's meetings. In this regard, as you all know, at the beginning of May, Norway expressed its interest to host and preside over the Fourth Review Conference next year.

An opportunity will be given to Norway to present its initial ideas for the Fourth Review Conference.

We look forward to your engagement on these topics and to your interventions concerning the Committee's observations.

Finally, let me thank the GICHD and its Director, Stefano Toscano, for supporting the organisation of the intersessional meetings.

Stefano – we are very grateful for the GICHD's continued support to these meetings and your organisation's commitment in this regard.

The floor is yours.

[STEFANO]

Thank you, Stefano.

The intersessional meetings have always been an opportunity for us to share detailed information on progress and challenges, as well as our experience and expertise. And there is a lot of expertise in this room.

We only have two days to go through a rather busy programme and I am sure the delegations have information to share about their many achievements since the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties. With this being said, it is time to start our work.

As usual, we would ask that, should you want the floor, to please register with the Implementation Support Unit your wish to do so, indicating the specific agenda item, as per the programme.

Finally, over the next two days we will benefit from interpretation in 5 languages, I take this opportunity to thank interpreters in advance for their work. With this said, should you have a written statement I would ask that you please ensure that the ISU receives it well ahead of your presentation in order for the ISU to provide it to the interpreters to facilitate their work.

I would ask delegations to remain in their seats as we will immediately proceed with the work of the Committee on Victim Assistance of the Convention. I would ask the Committee and the ISU to please join us.

