



**Fourteenth Meeting of the States Parties of the Convention on the Prohibition of
the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on
Their Destruction (APMBC)**

Geneva, 30 November – 4 December 2015

Statement by H.E. Amb. Vinicio Mati

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International Cooperation and Assistance

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your chairmanship and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Sixteen years after the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, significant progress has been made towards the full implementation of its core provisions, but there is still room for improvement. In particular, universalization remains a challenge. We call on all States that have not ratified or acceded to the APMBC to do so as soon as possible.

I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating Mozambique and Finland on achieving their goals under art. 5 and art. 4 of the Convention.

Mr President,

Italy is not directly affected by the plight of anti-personnel landmines, but is keenly aware of their devastating impacts on the daily lives of many people and communities around the world. Concern for such impacts led us to banning landmines nationally even before the Mine Ban Treaty was adopted, as well as to establishing a Fund specifically designated to support mine action activities in the broadest sense. Since 2001, when this Fund was created, we have allocated more than 45m EUR to integrated mine action programmes, which have included clearance activities, stockpile destruction, and assistance to victims.

In the current year, an amount of over 3 million Euros has supported mine action activities in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, Jordan, the Gaza Strip, and Sudan, while further programs are pending final approval. I would like to take this opportunity to recall that Italy has recently taken over the Chairmanship of the Mine Action Support Group.

Mr President,

Italy's assistance and cooperation activities in mine action are grounded on a few, core principles, which I will briefly outline.

First, we consider partnerships at all levels essential in fulfilling the goals of the Ottawa Convention. Whenever possible, these should be developed and strengthened, bringing in States, the UN, relevant international, regional, and civil society organizations, as well as survivors and their representative institutions. We place particular importance on the involvement of civil society, whose contribution goes well beyond the provision of "knowledge from the field". Civil society was fundamental in "getting to Ottawa" and it is still fundamental in implementing its results. Our mine action activities have indeed been carried out in partnership with UNMAS, UNRWA, the Organization of American States, and the Italian section of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, just to name a few.

Second, in our view, mine action is more than a purely humanitarian concern. Even if humanitarian considerations remain as relevant as ever, mine action, today, is a fundamental part of States' development efforts. For this reason, we need to ensure the full realization of landmine victims' political rights, their economic inclusion and adequate social protection.

The protection, inclusion and, above all, the integration of vulnerable groups, in particular people with disabilities, are a priority for Italy, and we would like to emphasize the relevance of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in this regard.

We also consider a priority to include gender perspectives in mine action, in at least two respects. From a narrow point of view, evidence tells us that women and girls are more affected by landmines; therefore, their specific needs should be taken into proper consideration. More generally, we must ensure that relevant gender and any other diversity aspects are taken into account in mine action interventions such that affected women, girls, boys, and men can benefit from them on an equal basis.

Third, we firmly believe that cooperation and assistance are not only about providing funds, but should, where possible, include the sharing of experience and practical know-how. In this regard, I would like to highlight the extensive clearance of explosive remnants of war conducted by the Italian Armed Forces operating abroad, notably in Afghanistan and Lebanon.

To conclude, Mr President, let me spend a few words on synergies. A contaminated land is unusable and dangerous; a victim is a victim; little difference does it make that these are so

because of landmines, cluster munitions, or other kinds of unexploded ordnance. We are well aware that different treaties discipline these weapons. We are also aware that the memberships of these treaties do not coincide. Nonetheless, we believe that in some areas – including clearance, victim assistance, and risk reduction education – joining forces and exploiting opportunities for cooperation, at the level of both programming and implementation, can only help us to reach our goals more efficiently and rapidly.

Thank you, Mr President
