

**MESSAGE TO THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION
AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

Vienna, 18 December 2017

His Excellency, Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi, President of the Meeting

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, it gives me great pleasure to greet the delegates of the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I commend Austria for hosting and preparing this Meeting. Much of the initial legwork in the preparations for the negotiations in Oslo took place in Vienna 20 years ago so reconvening here is a fitting tribute to our host country and its leadership.

I would like to acknowledge, in particular, Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi, one of the veterans of the Ottawa process, who is now presiding over our proceedings.

I would also like to praise the International Campaign to Ban Landmines which is celebrating its 25th anniversary and to recognize its vision, determination and critical role in bringing about and in supporting implementation of this Convention. Just over 20 years ago, Jody Williams and the ICBL were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of changing the vision of a ban into a feasible reality.

Much has been accomplished in pursuit of the noble goals of this Convention in the last twenty years. As just stated by Secretary-General Guterres, the progress is remarkable. Over 80% of the States have undertaken to put an end to human suffering caused by this particularly horrendous weapon and to achieve a mine-free world; some 51 million stockpiled anti-personnel landmines have been destroyed; vast territories of land previously contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war have been cleared and released for sustainable productive use and development; children and their communities have learned how to prevent physical harm through mine risk education campaigns; rights-based approaches provide victims and survivors with a renewed opportunity for a life with dignity. It is rare in the disarmament field to have a treaty that has such a direct impact on ordinary people.

During the next few days you will focus on the status and operation of the Convention and consider how best to achieve the ambitious vision and political aspiration for a world free of anti-personnel mines by 2025; you will discuss the reports of the streamlined implementation machinery which is assisting you in meeting the challenges faced by the Convention, in particular how to intensify efforts to clear mined areas and destroy mines; and you will continue to assist and cooperate

in and monitor the implementation of the Convention's goals at national level. The United Nations is committed to supporting these efforts in every way possible.

I take this opportunity to call on all States that have not yet done so to consider adhering to this important treaty. The United Nations also firmly condemns any use of this horrendous and indiscriminate weapon. We must remain true to our ultimate goal.

This Meeting and the Convention's anniversary provide us also with a good opportunity to reflect on and to promote lessons learned from the way this Convention was negotiated and is being implemented. This is a much needed approach in a world facing a growing threat of the use of means and methods of warfare that cause serious humanitarian concern.

Let me briefly mention three of them:

- First and foremost, this Convention is a real humanitarian treaty which saves lives, mitigates suffering and provides renewed opportunities for the mine-survivors and their families and communities. It reminds us that notwithstanding the importance of the traditional approach centred on the individual and collective national security interest, disarmament should stay focussed on the impact of a weapon and on how to prevent future harm and restore human dignity.
- The negotiation and implementation of the Mine Ban Convention is the result of a unique cooperation between States, civil society and relevant international organizations. This success demonstrates how much can be achieved when different stakeholders join forces and create powerful partnerships to achieve a shared humanitarian goal. Multilateralism yields results, and this Convention has proved how a common "utopian" goal can become an attainable reality.
- Last but not least, the Convention establishes new high standards for compliance by applying, in particular, an evidence based analysis, monitoring and solution approach. In a world which is witnessing a decrease in the mine action funds, more accurate information allows for a more efficient way of using the available resources and working together.

Before I conclude, I would like to add a personal note. I served as an advisor to the Chair in the Oslo negotiations 20 years ago and am happy to see many of those who were there and at the signing ceremony in Ottawa. I would also like to pay tribute to the many victims of landmines, also to survivors, and to those from all walks of life that worked tirelessly to bring this Convention to fruition and to the accomplishments it has achieved. Among these I include the late Jackie Selebi and Clive Pearson.

I wish you a successful conclusion to your work. Let us continue with determination to finish the job and free the world from the threat of anti-personnel landmines! You may rely on the full cooperation and support of the United Nations in addressing the challenges ahead.