



European Union

**EU General Statement
16th Meeting of States Parties to the
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Vienna, 18-21 December 2017**

Delivered by Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-proliferation Jacek Bylica

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Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Andorra.

At the outset, let me congratulate Austria and you personally, on a very active Presidency of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. It is a pleasure to see an EU Member State representative leading our work in this 20th anniversary year. Let me also thank all Committee members and the Implementation Support Unit for their valuable work. I also wish to recognise the important role that civil society has played and continues to play in support of the Ottawa Convention.

You can rest assured of the continued strong support of the European Union. All 28 EU Member States have acceded to the Ottawa Convention and we are determined in pursuing its objectives and promoting its universalisation and full implementation. We congratulate Sri Lanka for having joined the Convention as the 163rd State Party and we urge all States not yet Party to follow suit.

The Ottawa Convention is clearly one of the success stories in multilateral disarmament diplomacy. It combines a strong global norm with impressive results on the ground with regard to humanitarian protection, stabilisation, development and disarmament. Tens of thousands of human lives have been saved. Victims' needs are more systematically addressed with a view to ensuring the full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society. Thirty countries that were previously heavily contaminated are now mine-free and vast areas have been cleared. More than 53 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed, most recently in Belarus with support from the European Union. Mine action has also served as an instrument for peace in many post-conflict situations, facilitating confidence-building and reconciliation between former enemies. One of the sources of success of the Convention has been the overall outstanding level of compliance of States Parties with the key provisions.

* Candidate Countries Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

But the work is not done yet. Therefore, the EU and its Member States are committed to ensuring further strengthening of the Convention by encouraging States to overcome the remaining and emerging challenges. New large-scale contamination by anti-personnel mines including improvised anti-personnel mines is reported in countries such as Iraq, Libya and Syria. This has resulted in a reversal of the downward trend in the number of global mine casualties for the second year in a row since the entry into force of the Convention. Particularly worrying is the use of improvised anti-personnel mines in the context of urban warfare, specifically aimed at terrorising civilians and hindering the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. This is a key driver in forcing people to leave their homes and a major factor behind the current refugee crisis.

The new threats must be addressed with determination, without distracting attention from the vast areas across the world that remain inaccessible due to legacy mine contamination. Their impact continues to disproportionately affect rural communities, usually some of the poorest, as well as minorities and marginalised groups. In addition to the humanitarian impact, the mine-related risks hinder prospects for sustainable socio-economic development. Thousands of people continue to suffer from mine fields. They should not be forgotten.

In light of these developments, it is necessary to reaffirm our commitments with regard to international cooperation and assistance, as the obligation to rid the world of anti-personnel mines is a collective effort by all States Parties and not only of the affected States. In this regard, the EU welcomes the individualised approach pursued under the Convention that seeks a tailor-made approach in assisting affected countries in addressing their specific challenges and needs. We will continue to support mine action in coordination with affected countries, donors, operators and other stakeholders.

The EU and its Member States remain a top donor for humanitarian mine action to address the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war in conflict-affected countries. Between 2012 and 2016, EU institutions funded mine action for €300 million worldwide. In the same period, EU Member States also committed around €300 million, which brings our total commitments to €600 million over the past five years. EU assistance covers all key aspects – mine clearance, risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and capacity building – and benefits nearly all heavily affected countries, including Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Syria and Ukraine.

To demonstrate our continued commitment, EU Ministers adopted a new EU Council Decision in August 2017, worth of €2.3 million, to promote universal adherence to the Convention and to support States Parties in their efforts to implement the mine clearance, victim assistance, and stockpile destruction aspects of the Maputo Action Plan. We would like to thank the Ottawa Convention Implementation Support Unit for implementing this EU-funded project. Further information on this project and past EU mine action will be offered at a side event on Tuesday, 19 December.

In the 2014 Maputo Declaration, the States Parties reaffirmed their ambition to ensure that there are no new mine victims, to see that survivors participate in their societies on an equal basis and to intensify efforts to complete clearance and stockpile destruction goals to the

fullest extent possible by 2025. Ending the era of anti-personnel mines is possible, but our aspiration to meet with the goals of the Convention by 2025 will require further sustained efforts. It is our joint responsibility to preserve the integrity of the Convention and strengthen its effectiveness.

Mr. President,

The EU condemns the use of anti-personnel mines by any actor, whether States or non-State actors. The EU appeals to all non-States Parties to the Convention and non-State actors to stop manufacturing, trading and using of anti-personnel mines. The EU appeals to all States Parties to actively implement all aspects of the Maputo Action Plan in order to achieve the goal of an anti-personnel mine free world without new victims by 2025.

Thank you, Mr. President