



**Statement by Rev. Msgr. Janusz S. Urbańczyk,
Head of Delegation of the Holy See 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, 18-21 December 2017

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See wishes to thank you for the hard work and commitment that you have dedicated to the organization of this meeting and throughout the mandate of the Austrian presidency.

The concrete success of this Convention, made possible by what Pope Francis defined as a “splendid humanitarian enterprise”¹ of people of good will, is evident in the thousands of victims assisted and the thousands more that it has potentially saved. This significant instrument of peace has been a catalyst in bringing the international community closer together as a family of nations and has helped State Parties to seek a greater harmony with Creation through demining.

Mr. President,

This Convention truly illuminates and exemplifies the connection between disarmament and integral human development. The same courage and inspiration that filled our hearts twenty years ago must renew our determination to put an end to the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines through honouring and respecting, in good faith, the legal obligations that State Parties have contracted. In this regard, my Delegation wishes to elaborate briefly on three points that the Holy See deems crucial to preserving the integrity of this Convention.

First, in recent years we have witnessed an increasingly high number of victims of landmines. This is an alarming reality that poses a serious threat to the spirit of the Convention. All victims of landmines, direct or indirect, are a constant reminder of the inadequacy of the international community to address the matter effectively and of the emptiness that results from conflicts. Assistance to victims is an essential step in walking together along the path to a peaceful world. It is a legal obligation and a moral duty to assure that such a priority remains before the public conscience.

¹ Pope Francis, Message to the President of the Third Review Conference on Anti-Personnel Landmines, 27 June 2014.

Second, it is indispensable that each State Party respect its legal obligations in meeting stockpile destruction deadlines. Landmines provide a false and artificial approach to security. It is crucial to remove the risk and temptation to use these indiscriminate and treacherous weapons again.

Third, landmine clearance is a necessary step toward the integral human development of the affected communities. The primary responsibility to eliminate these lurking threats to civilians belongs to the States concerned; it is important, however, to continue the generous expressions of solidarity in assisting affected States. Every square meter matters. It is essential that mine clearance remains a top priority. What is at stake here are the lives of people and the well-being of communities.

Mr. President,

The Holy See continues to attach the greatest importance to freeing humanity from these terribly destructive weapons, to achieving a world free of landmines and to assisting the victims.

As Pope Francis reminds us, everything and everyone is interconnected. If we do not uphold and promptly implement our legal obligations in good faith, there will inevitably be more suffering and casualties caused by these treacherous weapons. The causal connection is readily evident in the numerous victims. Is this what we want for our people?

Thank you, Mr. President.