

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

Mr President (*H.E. Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria to the UN in Geneva*),

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union, but allow me to add a few remarks to express our support for this important Convention.

The Ottawa Convention is one of the success stories of multilateral disarmament diplomacy. In addition to the overall good level of compliance by States Parties in its key aspects, this convention has brought clear results on the ground, through mine clearance, victim assistance, stockpile destruction, and as a peace-building instrument. Estonia shares its objectives and its aspiration to achieve an anti-personnel mine free world without new victims by 2025. We support strengthening the effectiveness of this convention, its universalisation and the implementation of the Maputo Action Plan.

We recognise, that although the Ottawa Convention became an international norm quickly after its entry into force, financing its implementation has been a challenge over the past years. It is regrettable that the serious financial situation of the Convention has led to the shortening of the Meeting of States Parties for two consecutive years. We urge all States to comply with their financial obligations on time and pay all outstanding arrears.

Mr President,

Estonia is a firm supporter of humanitarian demining activities and mine action and has been regularly contributing to demining efforts for more than 10 years. Humanitarian demining is one of the priority areas in our Government's strategy for Estonia's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance for years 2016-2020. In recent years, we have increased our contributions, including financial support to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), as well as to clean-up of various explosive remnants of war and mine-clearance activities under several bilateral and international humanitarian projects. In the beginning of this year the Estonian government redoubled its annual contribution to UNMAS mine action activities in Iraq (*40 000 USD*). Estonia has previously supported mine action in Mali, Gaza, Libya, Lebanon and Afghanistan. Moreover, in 2017 the MFA Estonia financed a

development cooperation project for developing a humanitarian demining training system in Ukraine.

Since 2006, we have also regularly supported and gradually increased our contributions to the Ottawa Implementation Support Unit (ISU) in achieving its mandate-based targets. Estonia stands ready to look further into financing mechanisms of the ISU when the States Parties are ready to do so.

On a different matter. We recognise fully the difficult challenges Ukraine faces with regard to Article 5 obligations as result of Russian aggression and ongoing military conflict in the area. Recalling, that the 15th Meeting of States Parties expressed concern about this situation, we invite Ukraine to submit the request for extension of Article 5 at the earliest opportunity. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

Mr President,

At this 20th anniversary year of the signature of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, let me conclude by commending you, Mr President, for Austria's active Presidency of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and express my gratitude to you as well as to the Implementation Support Unit for all the good work done to ensure a successful meeting. You have my delegation's full support.

Thank you!