



ICRC

Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personal Mines and Their Destruction

Statement by ICRC Director General Yves Daccord

Palais des Nations, Geneva, 26 November 2018

Madame President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The success of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) in protecting lives and limbs is undeniable.

Twenty-one years after adoption, countless lives have been saved, and the goal of a mine-free world is within reach.

Thankfully, we no longer live in a world where 20,000 people, mostly civilians are killed or mutilated, by mines each year.

Today:

- More than 80% of States are party to the Convention;
- New use of anti-personnel mines by States not Party is a rare aberration;
- The legal trade and production of anti-personnel mines has virtually disappeared;
- More than 54 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed; and
- New treaties have built on the convention, protecting civilians from explosive remnants of war and banning cluster munitions.

We are also seeing the longer term benefits of this remarkable treaty.

I am particularly encouraged by what the ICRC observes in communities previously contaminated by landmines from a humanitarian perspective, and the knock-on effects to build peace and security.

Communities are safer: children can walk safely to school, adults can travel to work without fearing for the worst. Productive agricultural land has been reclaimed, meaning opportunities for livelihoods and local economies.

Greater stability has opened the door to development. And the prospects for local reconciliation and peace have improved.

For example in Colombia: 50 years of civil war left a widespread legacy of landmines and explosive remnants of war. The historic 2016 peace agreement included important

provisions to end the conflict and build peace, including through mine clearance. Today access to contaminated sites for clearance is improving, and ex-fighters are employed in mine action, a positive step towards reintegration.

Although there are still areas of Colombia affected by conflict and thus off limits to humanitarian de-mining, the innovative provisions on mine clearance in the peace agreement set a good example for other peace processes.

When we look at the success of the convention here today, the achievements seem especially impressive. Because elsewhere, multilateral diplomacy seems to be failing us. The norms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law are questioned. Dialogue is often blocked and accepted conventions are broken.

As a neutral frontline humanitarian actor, the ICRC sees the devastating humanitarian consequences of failed negotiations on the ground; especially when weapons that cause unacceptable harm are used.

The APMBC, like the Convention on Cluster Munitions, reminds us what shared action can achieve – for individuals and communities, for development, peace and security.

Indeed, the convention was the result of a partnership between states, civil society and international organisations, including the ICRC and the broader International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. And importantly the convention would not have been possible without the determined advocacy of landmine survivors themselves.

And let us not forget that this progress was possible also, because of the support of many members of armed forces who understood early on the moral unacceptability of a continued use of these weapons.

But the bottom line is: the APMBC should not be considered exceptional.

We should not be impressed that the law has been followed, that civilians have been saved from the indiscriminate impact of these deadly weapons.

Fragile consensus-building and unwillingness for dialogue cannot become a norm that we accept.

In my mind it starts with acting to ensure the basic standards of humanity are upheld. The ICRC is ready to work with states to look for solutions that can be found in the reliable framework of international humanitarian law.

We have seen what collective action can achieve in the name of humanity to protect civilians from indiscriminate weapons or uncontrolled availability of weapons.

I urge States, as a humanitarian imperative, to reinvigorate their efforts to faithfully implement existing treaties that prohibit or limit the use of certain weapons, including the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War, and the Arms Trade Treaty.

Madame President,

As the APMBC has demonstrated, it is possible for limits agreed, even for weapons in widespread use.

But we must be vigilant in implementation. There is more to do to ensure its full implementation and we cannot for a moment risk going backwards.

Landmine victims may not be in the headlines of the news, but mines are still taking a heavy toll on civilians in conflicts around the world.

Figures released last week from the Landmine Monitor show an overall rise in casualties in recent years. Civilians account for 87 percent of casualties and almost half of the victims are children.

With determined implementation and sustained resources the promises of the Maputo Action Plan can be realized.

Concerted effort must be directed to make certain that by 2025:

- All stockpiles still held by States Parties are destroyed;
- Contaminated land is cleared within the Convention's deadlines and the 2025 commitments;
- Victims can access the care, rehabilitation and services they need to participate equally in their societies; and
- Adequate funding and resources are provided.

By 2025 affected States Parties should be landmine free and with no new victims on their territories. This is an ambitious goal, but it remains achievable. I call on all States Parties and Convention partners to redouble efforts, especially in the lead-up to the Convention's Review Conference next year.

The APMBC sets an example of how the international community can collectively respond to widespread suffering caused by the use of indiscriminate weapons: protecting civilians through a comprehensive prohibition and elimination of anti-personnel mines – whether manufactured or improvised in nature.

I encourage the international community to find and harness the power of its common action to set limits and protect civilians from the worst tools used in the wars of today, in the name of humanity.

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