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Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the
United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
2018 Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention
Geneva, 29 November 2018

Madam 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 Afghan presidency.

Enrooted in a humanitarian perspective, the Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines has achieved notable success and contributed to efforts of peace and reconciliation by placing the human person at the center of concerns. In this regard, it is encouraging that States that are not yet party to the Convention are joining its spirit.

In particular, this Delegation welcomes the initial and symbolic efforts of joint mine removal projects in the Joint Security Area in the Korean Peninsula, which could serve as a testimony that security is better achieved through dialogue, trust-building, and disarmament.

At the same time, however, it is deeply disconcerting that anti-personnel landmines continue to be placed, including by non-state actors, thus creating fear and insecurity, and above all, new potential victims.

Madam President,

It is of the utmost importance to renew our determination to honor the legal obligations contracted. Only if we fully respect the letter and spirit of the Convention can we also honor the dignity of the too many direct and indirect victims of landmines.

Mine clearance, stockpile destruction and assistance to victims are interlinked and essential steps in walking together along the path to a world free from landmines. It is a legal obligation and a moral duty to ensure that such priorities remain firmly before the public conscience. In this regard, the generous contributions provided by donors for mine clearance and for assistance to victims are the concrete expression of international solidarity and of a true family of nations.

Madam President,

Mine victims, among whom far too many are children, are a stark reminder of the cruelty and tragedy of conflicts. It is important not to leave them behind but to ensure their full rehabilitation, socio-economic re-integration, as well as psychological and spiritual assistance.

The enduring presence of landmines still prevents the integral human development of entire populations, affecting the socio-economic growth of many countries. If we truly wish to achieve a world free of landmines by 2025, there is no time to waste. In this regard, the Holy See commends all those brave peacemakers who risk their lives to perform demining activities and wishes them a safe mission. Please do not be discouraged in front of such a daunting task! Thank you.