

**Video message by Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Sigrid Kaag on the occasion of the Netherlands taking over the presidency of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) from Sudan, at the closing ceremony of the Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties, Geneva, Friday 20 November 2020**

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*Spreektijd: ca. 3 min.*

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Mr President,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

I am honoured to speak to you today on this special occasion: the handover of the presidency of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention to the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is proud to have the opportunity to contribute to one of the most successful international disarmament conventions, which to date numbers 164 States Parties.

Thanks to our joint efforts, global mine action is enabling people to live in a safe and secure environment.

And for people living in mine-affected areas, clearing landmines makes a huge difference to their daily lives.

It determines whether farming communities can grow their own crops or will go short of food.

It determines whether children can go to school or be forced to stay at home.

And, quite simply, clearing mines can mean the difference between life, or death.

And if not death, then certainly serious injury.

The COVID-19 crisis has made things very difficult for the mine action sector; delaying operations in many countries and hampering consultations on every level.

However, I am pleased to say that the sector has proved resilient, and is determined to continue its important work.

I am most grateful to the Republic of the Sudan and His Excellency Osman Abufatima Adam Mohammed for guiding the Convention through these challenging circumstances and ensuring a smooth presidency.

The Netherlands is committed to building on Sudan's good work in the year ahead.

During the Dutch presidency, we would like to focus on three themes:

1. capacity building in mine-affected countries;
2. innovation in areas such as stockpile retention for training purposes, or mine risk reduction and education programmes; and

3. an inclusive approach that focuses, among other things, on anchoring mental health and psychosocial support in victim assistance programmes.

I am optimistic that next year we will be able to physically meet in the Netherlands, in the coastal town of Noordwijk, at the Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties.

And I very much hope that by then, the mine action community will be able to say that good progress has been made towards achieving our ultimate goal: a mine-free world.

Thank you.