

## Statement by Valon Kumnova, GICHD Chief of Mine Action Programmes

To be delivered under 'Clearing mined areas and mine risk education and reduction' session

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the adoption of the Oslo action Plan this time last year, we can clearly see that tremendous progress has been made in terms of the survey and clearance of landmines across many affected states. This tangible progress has been made possible through the effective deployment of operational teams, who have worked tirelessly in this difficult year. Our gratitude goes to the many thousands of deminers and supporting staff in affected states, whom regardless of the pandemic, have continued clearing landmines and saving lives.

The utilisation of modern IMAS-compliant land release methodologies, underpinned by a strong sense of national ownership, and in many cases underwritten by generous support from international donors, has been the key driver that has enabled States to declare, with confidence, the progress made to clear their land of mine contamination.

In some states, however, progress has not kept pace with improvements in survey and clearance, including the adoption of new technologies; in particular those technologies that gather and manage data more effectively, such as improved detection systems and developments using platforms such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. We must all work harder to disseminate best practices to all affected states.

As we move forward with Land Release globally, and our efforts are increasingly focused on reaching the clearance objectives under Article 5, the job ahead is becoming ever more challenging. In recent years we have seen that the nature of conflict is changing, and as a consequence the operating context within which we work is evolving. The requirement to deploy field teams into often complex urban or peri-urban environments, in some cases in the immediate aftermath of conflict, is just one of the factors that is naturally impacting on the way that field operations are managed

Areas prioritized early on during mine action operations, were generally in more accessible areas, with more community and traffic around them, thus information was available. In order to maintain the pace of progress, we must therefore turn greater attention to targeting LR efforts more effectively.

Perhaps the greatest advances in terms of “finishing the job” under Article 5 more quickly are to be captured through defining better evidence-based criteria

for LR within the framework of National Mine Action Standards. While the IMAS provide the over-arching framework for the quality of our Land Release efforts, the specifics of how All Reasonable Effort is defined must be a product of each state's analysis of their specific context. Clarity around what All Reasonable Effort entails and why, will allow NMAAs to precisely monitor the quality of their operations, confidently move forward with signing off on cleared land, and ensure that communities trust in the safety of their land. A lack of clarity in terms of All Reasonable Effort means that the opposite scenario is likely— operations will be less efficient, will often lack standardization among operators, and quality cannot be ensured. There is no silver bullet for this process of analysis; this is best achieved through gathering evidence and creating an inclusive dialogue between NMAAs, operators and mine-affected communities. The GICHD will continue to work with NMAAs to facilitate the process of analysis and support the dialogue that defines All Reasonable Effort through National Standards.

Mr. President,

The GICHD aligns with the statement of the Gender Working Group (read by MAG) and echoes the need for more concrete and systematic gender mainstreaming in the planning, implementation and monitoring of all activities and indicators of the Oslo Action Plan. Gender equality and inclusion are a goal in themselves, but they are also essential for the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of mine action interventions.

A very concrete example is ensuring that non-technical survey is conducted by teams of men and women that can access all affected groups and get the most accurate and complete information on the presence of contamination. The need for gender balanced teams is evident and the opportunities in affected states, including in more challenging contexts are presenting themselves, so we need to capitalise on this.

Thank you!