



Statement of the Netherlands
under agenda item 9 (b) on
Clearing mined areas
18th Meeting of the State parties of the
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Thank you Mister President,

As this is the first time my delegation takes the floor, allow me to express the Netherlands' gratitude to you, Mr President, and your team for the way you have conducted your presidency this week and throughout the year, in particular during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Your leadership has been exemplary.

In addition to the statement delivered by the EU, the Netherlands would like to make some remarks in its national capacity.

Significant progress has been made to clear areas from anti-personnel mines, which cause so much human suffering. We congratulate Chile on achieving the mine-free status by submitting its Declaration of Completion. Over the last twenty years, almost 200 mine fields were cleared and it also destroyed its full stockpile. Chile made an important contribution to our common ambition to achieve a mine free world. We urge all others States Parties with remaining Article 5 mine clearance obligations to follow Chile's lead. We also congratulate the United Kingdom on the news that clearance in the Falklands has been completed.

Despite some of these positive developments, the Netherlands is troubled by the increased contamination in certain states, mainly as the result of the increased use of mines of an improvised nature. The Netherlands would like to reiterate that mines of an improvised nature that meet the Convention's definition of an anti-personnel mine, fall under the obligations of the Convention. This has also been emphasised in the Oslo Action Plan that we adopted last year.

We would like to commend Nigeria in particular for taking its responsibilities under the Convention by submitting an extension request, after recognising that it was mined again by anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature. We urge other States Parties encountering comparable situations to undertake similar action. Only when the issue regarding these anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature is acknowledged, can the international community assist with clearing them.

We further like to commend Ukraine for the submission of its extension request this year. The Netherlands recognises the challenges Ukraine is facing with newly identified mined

areas under its jurisdiction, following the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and the conflicts in parts of eastern Ukraine. The Netherlands offers its solidarity in this regard and welcomes this request as part of the fulfilment of Ukraine's article 5 obligations.

The Netherlands commends the other States Parties for submitting their extension requests this year and emphasises the importance of timely submission with a view to a proper and transparent process that leads to these requests being granted by the States Parties. In that light, we regret that Eritrea failed to submit an Article 5 extension request so far, which risks the country being in non-compliance with its Article 5 obligation when the deadline expires on 31 December 2020.

When clearing contaminated land, we would like to emphasize the importance of conducting mine clearance in an effective way by optimal use of new technologies and methodologies, for example on land release via non-technical survey. Additionally, when clearing anti-personnel mines, including those of an improvised nature, safety and security of personnel remains of utmost importance. This means using up-to-date standards that take into account the different contexts and purposes in which clearance takes place. We urge countries to update their national mine action standards in line with the updated International Mine Action Standards, for example with regard to improvised explosive devices.

Another important aspect of reducing victims of landmines is mine risk reduction and education efforts. When clearing mined areas is not a possibility, we should at least extend a helping hand to the civilians living in close proximity to these areas. By providing the means to these people, whether in the form of educational programmes or other programmes aimed at ensuring the decrease of risk of falling victim to landmines, lives are saved. The Oslo Action Plan contains an important section on mine risk education and mine risk reduction that should be solidly implemented.

Thank you, Mister President.