

Pledging Conference für die Antipersonenminenverbotskonvention

Genf, am 28.2.2017 um 15 h in Raum XII

### **Speaking Notes für einführende Worte durch HGS**

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here with you on the eve of the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1999 marked a turning point in the approach to international disarmament instruments. For the first time a legally binding disarmament instrument entered into force that went beyond a mere restriction of the means and methods of warfare by putting an additional explicit focus on the protection and support of civilians and victims.

The result of close co-operation between the – now 162 – States Parties and civil society to ban a complete class of weapons and to address the plight of their survivors is historic. It is in this spirit that I am particularly glad to share the panel with ICRC and ICBL. Since its adoption in 1997, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has become a global success story, a trail-blazer for humanitarian disarmament.

- The number of casualties has gone down by two thirds,
- mine clearance returned large areas of previously contaminated land to productive use,
- more than 51 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines (APMs) have been destroyed by States Parties
- and today only a handful of countries is still producing APMs.

The most recent success is the announcement by Algeria – one of the most mine-affected countries – that it has completed mine-clearance, even ahead of the deadline set under the convention. Let us acknowledge this achievement by an applause. (Applaus)

In 2015, however, the number of people killed or injured by APMs, as well as victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs), remnants of cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) has risen sharply. In the same year, financial support for mine action fell to the lowest level since 2005. And this at a time when we

have to redouble our efforts to reach the 2025 goal that we set ourselves at the Review Conference in Maputo.

In line with the humanitarian dimension of our foreign policy, Austria has been a staunch supporter of a ban on APMs since its early days. Austria is honoured to have the presidency during 2017, the year of 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signature of the Convention in Ottawa. Austria is dedicated to make progress on our path towards universalization. We strive for cooperation among all States Parties as well as with civil society to achieve tangible results in the implementation of the Convention, thereby making this planet a safer place.

I will leave the pledging to the second part of this meeting, but I would like to share with you that Austria has most recently donated half a million Euros each to victim assistance in Iraq and for surveying and demining activities in Libya

I hope to see you all again at the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Vienna from 18 to 22 December 2017.