



## Press Release

### Afghanistan's Chief Executive on growing number of non-state actors using improvised landmines

Geneva, 27 February 2018 – Afghanistan's Chief Executive H.E. Dr Abdullah Abdullah urged the international community "to use all legal tools and instruments" to ban anti-personnel mines whether improvised or factory-made during a Pledging Conference of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Geneva.

Mine-affected Afghanistan, which holds the Presidency of the Convention, chaired the Conference seeking to put the focus back on funding the work of the Convention. Afghanistan's Chief Executive who delivered opening remarks at the Conference, appealed to the Convention's humanitarian imperative to protect lives and limbs not only in Afghanistan but all over the world.

"When used, a landmine does not see boundaries, nor does it differentiate between its victims. That is why we need a global perspective and a comprehensive approach to make sure that all countries and all armed groups, whatever their affiliation, are made to realize that it is inhuman and illegal to deploy landmines," said His Excellency. "Over the years, we have had successes, but not enough to claim victory," he added.

"Today, not only does Afghanistan make every effort to deal with the traditional anti-personal mine and unexploded ordinance that were used during the conflicts of the 80s and 90s, but it is also struggling to counter the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), including improvised anti-personnel mines, a weapon of choice used by terrorist groups and outfits such as the Taliban and local IS/Daesh cells," said the Chief Executive of Afghanistan

"Low intensity and regional conflicts in a number of countries around the world require that, as a priority, we strengthen the global norm against anti-personnel mines as we see an increase in the number of victims. Furthermore, our efforts to raise awareness of this threat through risk education and area clearance remain an important focus of our preventative work," added His Excellency, referring to the growing number of non-state actors making use of improvised anti-personnel mines which has increased the number of victims in recent years.

Dr Abdullah's remarks come at a time when people on the move see their lives increasingly threatened by these devices. "We see many such incidents in Afghanistan and other countries where thousands of families are on the move, either to flee conflict and difficult conditions, or are new returnees looking to resettle after having spent years as refugees."

During the Conference, Afghanistan reported that its Mine Action Program has cleared around 3,000 square kilometres and destroyed over 19 million landmines and explosive remnants of war since it began operations, and that in spite of new contamination at the hands of non-state actors, Afghanistan remains committed to meeting its 2023 Convention deadline.

#### Pledging Conference highlights

Former Minister of Health of Afghanistan and current Ambassador of Afghanistan to Switzerland and the UN in Geneva H.E. Suraya Dalil who is also the President of the Convention, chaired the meeting.

"This Pledging Conference is an opportunity for all States Parties, mine-affected and donors, to stand behind the mechanisms that we have collectively set up including the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, the Meetings of the States Parties of our Convention, and the Sponsorship Programme, the latter which allows the participation of States with few means and which are in the process of clearing

mined areas, destroying stockpiles and assisting victims, to engage on an equal-basis with others during Convention-related meetings,” said H.E. Dalil.

At the Conference, Australia in its role as Sponsorship Coordinator, appealed to States Parties to reverse the downward trend in contributions. Nearly 40 States, international and non-governmental organisations participated in the Conference.