

Statement by Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

Intersessional Meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Opening remarks, WMO Building, Geneva, 7 June 2018

Thank you Madam President, allow me to join you in welcoming all participants to Geneva.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recent developments in our field, marked by new contamination and a sharp increase in victims, show us that the need for efficient and effective mine action remains intact and that our work is as significant as ever.

In this context, safeguarding and upholding existing norms such as those set by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention bear ever more importance. The Convention is a benchmark treaty in both the humanitarian and disarmament fields. It has over the years yielded concrete positive results for the affected countries and their communities. It is thus crucial that our common engagement towards the Convention stays at the heart of our activities.

The fulfillment of the Maputo Action Plan requests all mine action actors to combine their efforts and collaborate closely. In this context, the implementation of the Convention must be supported by effective and efficient processes. The individualized approach, together with key components thereof such as national ownership, strategic planning as well as application of the latest standards, methods and tools, can play a pivotal role in this regard.

The support to national partners towards the timely fulfilment of the conventional obligations and completion targets is a priority for the Centre. We continue to allocate part of our resources to the development and implementation of comprehensive and integrated country-support packages that are tailored to the specific context faced by affected States.

A good example is the case of Sri Lanka, which acceded to the Convention in December 2017. The GICHD has been closely involved in the elaboration of Sri Lanka's national mine action strategy 2016-2020. It has also provided support on issues related to information management and risk management. With a strong national architecture in place, we are confident that Sri Lanka is well equipped for a timely completion of its Article 5 obligations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As stated in the newly published UN Secretary-General Agenda for Disarmament: “Mine action has played a particularly important role in threat mitigation, enabling humanitarian access, sustaining peace, socioeconomic development and operational effectiveness of peace operations”. This recognition of the importance of our work should encourage us to continue to make all efforts to find concrete and effective means by which we can fulfill the Convention’s noble objectives.

Thank you.