



EU Statement
Intersessional meeting
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 22 June – 24 June 2021

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

We welcome Netherland's Presidency of this important Convention and would like to commend you, Ambassador Robert Gabriëlse, for actively seeking to reinforce cooperation and increase synergies with all relevant actors in the current exceptional circumstances.

It is of utmost importance that we continue our collective efforts in order to meet the obligations under the Convention; to achieve further progress in the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, the clearance of mine-contaminated land, assistance to mine victims and sustainable national capacities. The intersessional meeting represents a key platform to share information on the progress made and to address the remaining challenges in implementing the Oslo Action Plan.

Article 5 on mine clearance

The EU would like to express its strong support towards the 32 States Parties that are making efforts to complete mine clearance operations, preferably by 2025, and bring us towards the fulfilment of our shared goal for a world free of anti-personnel mines. Significant progress has been made in implementing provisions of the Convention and of the Oslo Action Plan, but persistent challenges remain.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The absence of reliable methods of data collection and centralised national databases continue to affect various aspects of victim assistance. Completion remains affected by the lack of resources and sustainability of activities. Since the entry into force of the Convention, 63 States Parties have reported the presence of mined areas and to date 31 States Parties have reported completion of their mine clearance obligations under Article 5.

In this regard, the EU regrets that Eritrea has not yet submitted an Article 5 extension request, which makes it non-compliant with key obligations of the Convention for more than a year. The EU has carried out an official demarche in Asmara and would like to once again urge Eritrea to draw upon the resources of the Implementation Support Unit to develop its request and to submit it without delay.

There is a clear need for a strengthened cooperation, assistance and mobilization of resources towards a mine free world. The lack of financial resources is the main challenge and the EU calls upon all actors, public or private to collectively explore options for new and alternative sources of funding.

The EU strongly condemns the hideous attack at a demining camp in the Baghlan Province of Afghanistan that occurred on the evening of 8th June. Around 110 men, from local communities in northern Afghanistan, were in the camp having finished their work on nearby minefields, when the perpetrators opened fire. Eleven persons lost their lives and 15 were wounded in an unprecedented attack on persons who, on a daily basis, risked their lives to carry out humanitarian work to save lives and destroy explosive remnants in Afghanistan. This is a shocking violation of international humanitarian law. Those responsible must be held accountable and brought to justice.

The EU strongly condemns all use of anti-personnel mines, including of an improvised nature, which violate the norm against anti-personnel mines. The use of anti-personnel mines anywhere, anytime, and by any actor is unacceptable to the European Union. We appeal to all actors to refrain from the production, acquisition, stockpiling, trade, retention or transfer of anti-personnel mines and to halt to the use of anti-personnel mines, whether industrially manufactured, or improvised, worldwide. The burden placed by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war on individuals, families, communities, regions and States remains excessively high.

Universalisation

The Ottawa Convention, as reaffirmed by the 164 States Parties at the Fourth Review Conference, represents the global norm against anti-personnel mines, a norm that has saved thousands of lives and spared countless of children, who constitute the majority of mine victims. It must not be compromised. The EU calls upon all States non Parties, in particular major possessors and users of anti-personnel mines, to follow a self-declared policy of non-use, which will contribute to the universalization of the Ottawa Convention. In that regard, the EU welcomes the decision of the United States to re-examine its decision to re-authorize the use of anti-personnel mines by US military forces outside of the Korean Peninsula. The EU counts on the US to remain a partner and a top provider of mine action assistance.

For the European Union, a strong proponent of multilateralism, the universalisation and implementation of the Ottawa Convention is one of its main priorities in the area of human security and disarmament. The EU is fully committed to supporting the implementation of the Convention through the Actions of the Oslo Action Plan.

The EU considers that the intersessional meeting is an opportunity to review the progress, reaffirm commitments and generate a further push for further universalisation and strengthened implementation of the legal obligations under this important Convention.

Cooperation and assistance

As a top provider of cooperation and assistance for mine action, the EU is supporting mine affected States Parties in their efforts to realise their commitments under the Convention and to implement the Oslo Action Plan. Since 2018, the EU contributed EUR 280 million to mine action activities. Also, EU Member States are among the TOP donors for mine action.

The EU strongly supports further efforts towards increasing the ratio of gender reporting and commitments as an indispensable element within the Convention. Other important aspect highlighted in the Oslo Action Plan include the need to promote the universalisation of the Convention, stockpile destruction and transparency. We urge all States Parties to provide sufficient information through their national reports, especially those States Parties, which have not reported so far.

The EU is also supporting the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Convention to assist mine affected States Parties to set up national dialogues on mine clearance and victim assistance. In line with the Oslo Action Plan, these dialogues create a platform to strengthen coordination and dialogue with national and international stakeholders on progress, challenges and support for the implementation of the Convention.

Victim Assistance

The Oslo Action Plan reiterates States Parties' commitments to respond to the needs of mine victims and to protect their rights. This plan calls for the integration of Victim Assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks. The EU considers that there is a clear need to ensure that these measures are inclusive of gender, age and disability and well taken into account in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all programmes. We must ensure that the rights and needs of mine victims are effectively addressed.

The EU welcomes the progress made towards the implementation of the actions 33-41 and notably in developing plans with specific, measurable and objectives to support mine victims. Significant progress was observed in implementing provisions of the Convention and of the Oslo Action Plan but persistent challenges remain.

The EU considers that there is still progress to be made in view of developing respective national centralized database with information on persons killed or injured by mines. The absence of data collection and national centralised database continue to affect various aspects of Victim Assistance. The same applies to the need to ensure full access to free aid, rehabilitation services, psychological and medical care as well as to ensure social and economic inclusion and participation of mine victim survivors, including in rural and remote areas.

The Convention can continue to count on the EU's commitment to defend and strengthen the norm against anti-personnel mines and to support the full implementation and universalisation of the Convention.

Thank you, Mr. President