

**Intersessional meeting of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Geneva,**

**22 – 24 May 2019**

**Opening statement**

**H.E. Hans Brattskar, Ambassador of Norway, President of the Fourth Review Conference**

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to the 2019 intersessional meetings. We are here to discuss the challenges and progress made since the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties (17MSP). Six months from now, we will meet again in Oslo for the Fourth Review Conference. In other words, this meeting is an important stop on the road to Oslo. Let us use this opportunity well.

I am pleased to see such wide participation here today, from States Parties to the Convention including National Directors, from international organizations and civil society. I am also happy to see that several States not Party are present and participating in our work.

This year, we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *entry into force* of the Convention. Over the past decades, much has been achieved. The Convention is the result of partnership between states, civil society, UN and other international organizations based on a shared goal: to protect people from landmines. The Mine Ban Convention was the first international disarmament treaty to recognize the rights of victims and survivors. Over the past 20 years, States Parties have destroyed nearly 53 million stockpiled mines. Vast areas of land have successfully been cleared from the danger of landmines and released back to local communities. 31 countries have completed mine-clearance.

These are all major victories for the Convention, and shows us precisely why what we do is so essential. But we all know that much still remains to be done in order to fulfil the objectives of the Convention and to reach the goal of a mine-free world. Over the next few days, we will gain a better understanding of our progress to date, and of the challenges remaining. As we do this, we will always have the upcoming Review Conference in the back of our minds: how can the new Oslo Action Plan best respond to the remaining challenges? How should we collectively work to reach the objectives of the Convention?

The Review Conference must strengthen the commitments adopted more than 20 years ago. It is an opportunity to renew the political attention and commitment needed to fulfil the Convention's obligations and goals. The Review Conference is an opportunity for all of us to take responsibility for the future of the Convention and to stake out the course for the next five years.

As Presidency, I am committed to ensuring that this Review Conference happens. It is important for me to understand the impact of this Convention in contaminated countries. Since November, I have

been travelling to get a broader perspective. I have been to Cambodia and Thailand to see how cooperation on mine clearance along a border can take place, mine action serving as a confidence building measure I was also impressed to see ongoing victim assistance efforts there. I have had the pleasure of visiting Ethiopia where I had bilateral meetings with several States Parties and met with the African Union in an effort to spur renewed political attention to Mine Action in the AU and in Africa.

I have engaged with the EU as an important donor to the sector in Brussels. Recently I visited Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina, attending a regional symposium, engaging in political conversations and visiting mine clearance operations. Next, I will visit Turkey in July together with the Chair of the Article 5 Committee and the ISU.

I would like to assure you that this presidency enjoys the full support and engagement of my government. Our Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Development and diplomats around the world are consistently raising the Mine Ban Convention in their bilateral conversations with States Parties as well as with States not Party.

As I said, this meeting is an important step on the road to Oslo. Let us together make the most of the time we have available and use the opportunity to the fullest. I therefore kindly ask for delegates to keep their statements short and to the point. I am thankful for all the support for my presidency from your delegations, but there is no need to congratulate me in your statements, for example.

During these intersessional meetings, we will go through progress and remaining challenges in all aspects of the Convention. Each of the Convention's four committees will lead the discussion related to their respective mandate and I will present updates on all matters under my mandate as President. On Friday after lunch, we will then turn our attention completely towards the Review Conference with the First Preparatory Meeting. This will be an opportunity to discuss the substantive documents that will be developed for the Review Conference, as well as practical preparations.

I said during my first statement after taking over the Presidency in November that I would work with all of you to *bring new energy and enthusiasm* into the implementation of this Convention. For this purpose we are introducing to these intersessionals a new type of day, which will take place tomorrow: thematic discussions on six topics that we think will provide essential input to the Oslo Action Plan to be adopted in November. As President, it is very important for me to listen to the expertise you as members of the extended mine action family have when developing the Oslo Action Plan. The thematic discussions give us a chance to do just that. Tomorrow will be devoted entirely to workshops. Each topic will be presented by a panel to frame the issue and provide everyone the opportunity to share their views and ideas. A summary of the thematic discussions will be provided to the plenary session of the First Preparatory Meeting on Friday. We hope this new format will not only give impetus to the development of the Oslo Action Plan but also to underline the continued relevance of the Mine Ban Treaty to today's challenges. I encourage your active participation.

With that, I have the pleasure to give the floor to Stefano Toscano, Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining for his opening remarks. Stefano, we are very grateful for GICHD's support, which allows us to continue meeting during intersessionals. Thank you, the floor is yours.