

**STATEMENT: Suraya Dalil, Permanent Representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the UNOG**

**16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the States Parties, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention  
UNOV - Austria, 21 December 2017**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

### **Introduction**

I would like to thank the organisers of this year States Parties meeting and in particular the Austria for being a remarkable host. My delegation, once more, welcomes Sri Lanka's membership to the Convention.

Afghanistan takes over the presidency of the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties at a critical point in the Convention's history. While tremendous progress has been achieved in the last 20 years, challenges remain, which require the continued determination and vigilance of the States Parties.

After years of steady decline in the number of casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, the figures are on the rise today, reaching a critical level in the last 20 years. The use of industry and improvised anti-personnel mines in current conflicts, and those that still remain in the ground decades after being sown threaten the lives and livelihoods of entire communities throughout the world.

In 2018, we will be half-way to the next Review Conference where States Parties will evaluate the actions undertaken under the 2014-2019 Maputo Action Plan. This community, parties to the Convention, have made substantive progress. However, this is the time to intensify our efforts. If we are to meet our 2025 ambition, we must carry out concerted and targeted efforts, combined with innovation and smart partnerships, in each of the areas under the Convention.

## **Victim Assistance**

Providing assistance and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration of mine victims has been a core ambition of the Convention. Over the years, a series of victim assistance tools have been developed, which provide us with a road map to deliver immediate and long-term support to mine victims. These provisions have, in many cases, also contributed to the realization of rights of persons with disabilities. It is time to start applying what we have learned and turn our ambition into action.

Working with the Committee on Victim Assistance and the States Parties as a whole, Afghanistan will support their work to identify challenges and articulate priorities for assistance. Afghanistan will aim to support the coordination between affected States, States in a position to provide support, and the various international and non-governmental organisations, and the civil societies that can help steer our efforts towards wider national disability programs.

## **Mine Clearance**

Every mine cleared is an indication of lives saved and harmful impact averted both on the individuals and the society.

The implementation of the mine clearance obligation of the Convention is critical to prevent future victims and ensure that land is returned to productive use. Today, 31 States Parties are in the process of implementing mine clearance obligations under the Convention. The lessons learnt and best practices acquired from the 30 States Parties that have completed their mine clearance obligations under the Convention, is evidence that implementation is possible in a relatively short time frame.

Afghanistan will work with the Committee on Article 5, States Parties and relevant international and non-governmental organisations to ensure that States Parties can implement the

Convention in a manner that is targeted and efficient. This is of the utmost importance if we are to make significant progress towards our aspiration of a mine-free world by 2025.

### **Stockpile destruction**

Stockpile destruction is one of the greatest successes of the Convention. The State Parties have reported destruction of 51 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines. Only three States Parties remain in the process of implementing their stockpile destruction obligations; two of them however, have missed their deadlines.

The provision of updated information through annual transparency reports is of the utmost importance to take stock of progress and challenges in the implementation of Article 4 stockpile destruction obligations. While chairing the Conference, Afghanistan will work closely with those States that have missed their deadlines, so that they are in a position to inform the States Parties of their efforts to implement this obligation.

### **Universalization**

We are clear that the universal adoption of the Convention is key to ensuring that we fulfil the promise made by the convention "to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines". Afghanistan will undertake efforts to actively promote the Convention with those States in Central and South Asia that have not yet joined as well as other States.

### **Compliance**

The purpose of the Committee on the cooperative compliance is to assist the States Parties in acting upon their commitment under Article 8.1 of the anti-personnel mine ban Convention to work together in a spirit of cooperation and to facilitate compliance in an effective manner.

### Cooperation and Assistance

Afghanistan is very active in the area of cooperation and assistance as mandated under the Convention. Afghanistan has a well-established mine action program with vast experiences in conducting surveys, clearance and destruction of explosive devices. Afghanistan has managed to clear 3,000 square kilometres from 1989 till now, and destroyed over 19 million landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices<sup>1</sup>. We know the linkages between the mine action and livelihood, community development, as well as with peace and integration program. We are ready to share experiences and expertise with other countries.

Afghanistan will continue to encourage other States, mine-affected countries and donors, to actively engage in these exchanges, which can in turn, accelerate our meeting the 2025 goal.

Important dates for next year events are June 7-8 the intersessional meetings and November 26 -30 the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the States Parties, both in Geneva.

On behalf of my government, I express my gratitude for the confidence extended to Afghanistan in its new role of Presidency to the anti-personnel mine ban Convention. My delegation and I look forward working with you all in 2018.

I wish you all very happy holidays and a great start to the New Year 2018!

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of that clearance, 2,913 communities and 129 districts were announced free from explosive devices.

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Thank you.