

STATEMENT
of the Delegation of Ukraine, at the 16th Meeting of the States-Parties
to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production
and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction
(Vienna, December 18, 2017)

Dear Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants of the Meeting,

Let me join the previous speakers in commending your efforts, Mr. President, as Chair of the 16th meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention aimed at ensuring full implementation of the Convention and for great preparation of this event.

Equally I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate everyone in this hall with the 20th anniversary of the Convention. In this regard it is worthwhile to mention that it was also in 1997 that the International Campaign to Ban Landmines was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize for spearheading the relevant effort. We all know, that a lot to be done so far, but we are witnessing that the noble cause of the Convention brings tangible accomplishments.

Mr. President,

By acceding to the Ottawa Convention Ukraine committed itself to get rid of the existing at that time APL stockpiles on our territory. Ukraine is determined to and continues to destroy existing ones, inherited from pre-independence times. It was about the destruction of more than 6,8 million APLs. Ukraine has been making a constant progress in this regard. In 2017 we successfully finished destruction of all PFM-1 mines, which totally amounts to 1,9 millions. In current difficult situation Ukraine still manages to direct funds from the State budget to the purpose of destruction of mines.

I would like to stress that despite significant challenges in the security field due to armed invasion of the Russian Federation against my country, Ukraine is doing its utmost to comply with its obligations under the Convention. In this connection one of the major challenges to Ukraine is demining.

Mr. President,

The last meeting of the States Parties to the Convention recommended the way out of the situation with mined areas in Ukraine, including by submitting the request. Of all the challenges to the Convention today, probably none is more important or vexing than the situation in my country. Let me shortly remind the background of the situation as it is very important.

At the moment of Ukraine's accession to the Convention and its entry into force for our country in 2006, Ukraine did not have any mined areas to clear. It means that by that time we had already been in full compliance with the provisions of Article 5 of the Convention. It is fair to say that Ukraine had fulfilled its obligations. Real implementation of Article 5 provisions commenced in 2014 as a result of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Before 2014 on eastern Ukraine there were no arsenal with mines or similar engineering facilities may currently be used by the military forces. Information, that we have from the intelligence, proves that all APLs planted in eastern Ukraine were produced in Russia and are only in service of the Russian Armed Forces. In particular, terrorists use Russian cluster munitions KPOM-2 with landmines UM-2, which cannot be deactivated, as well as other APLs clearly originated from the Russian Federation. There is almost a blanket ban on survey and clearance in seized areas and separatist-held territory, even international mine-clearance

organizations have no idea of the scale of the problem there. As the newly mined areas appeared, Ukraine indicated this problem in the reports for 2014 through 2017. The lack of accurate information on the issue due to absence of control by the Ukrainian Government over the occupied territories makes it impossible even to start preparation of a request in due time and content. Let alone the point of sensitivity, for example, to uncover of mined areas' coordinates under actual hostilities in Ukraine. I believe that anyone, but not only the States Parties seeking the extension, can imagine the complexity of this issue. It is clear that submission of the request under such circumstances would create another even more serious problem, but not any alleviate this situation.

Notwithstanding these facts, in 2017 Ukraine continued a sustained dialogue to discuss progress in preparation and possible submission of request for extension using all possibilities, including during the United Nations' annual meeting of mine action directors, bilateral meetings participating by interested States Parties and with the Committee on Article 5. As well, Ukraine actively worked in explaining the hurdles with all interested parties in the intersessional period. It is important to note that we always received full understanding from partners and had fruitful discussions with the Committee on Article 5, including the ones based on updated information reported regularly submitted under obligations on transparency within Article 7.

Ukraine remains open to discuss with partners in order to submit its extension request according to Article 5 under condition that in the decision on granting such an extension the following three points will be reflected: 1) February of 2014 is fixed as a date when mined areas appeared on the territory of Ukraine, 2) military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is indicated as a reason of appearance of such areas, 3) Ukraine will start effective implementation of Article 5 once it restored sovereignty and full territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and effective control over the whole territory, including control over the state border with Russia.

Let me stress once again that Ukraine has been and always will be a responsible and reliable international partner respecting all obligations under the Convention. Once restoring control over the liberated territory in the country we proceed promptly to clear the mined areas. Unfortunately, currently it is not possible even to identify all areas in Ukraine in which APLs are known or suspected to be planted.

In our view it is because of the Ottawa Convention does not contain any provisions that would reflect the situation happened in Ukraine due to the Russian aggression. The States Parties to the Convention did not previously have the precedent of dealing with the similar situation. Because of extremely complicated current situation in eastern Ukraine it cannot be solved in a short run. Nonetheless we continue to consider the best possible option within the Convention for way out.

Mr. President,

In the international fora and wherever appropriate Ukraine has been constantly promoted universalization of the Ottawa Convention, including supporting relevant UNGA Resolution calling in the UN format for the accession to this Convention by those states which have not done so yet. In particular, we use possibilities, arising from Ukraine's non-permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. We strongly believe that universalization of the Convention is one of the key elements to ensure full and complete implementation of its goals.

The need of the Convention universalization should be constantly addressed as three dozen countries still remain outside, according to a recent report by the Arms Control Association, and together they collectively account for an estimated stockpile of 160 mil APLs. This situation requires undertaking strong, collective result-orientated efforts. As well, the need of universalization of the Ottawa Convention is important to counter proliferation, as Ukrainian case revealed another problem that of terrorists' tapping into a flourishing black market in mines.

Mr. President,

According to the United Nations report, the Donbas region is becoming one of the most mined areas in the world as the result of Russian aggression in Ukraine. Mines, explosive remnants of war and booby-traps caused over 2/3 of all civilian casualties. The OSCE has repeatedly pointed out that Russia-led armed formations have not stopped mining activities, despite pledges to do so. The war in eastern Ukraine, on Europe's doorstep, has resulted in contamination with APLs on a scale not seen for decades. According to the recent UN estimates, Ukraine ranks the first place in the world in casualties of mine explosions and the third one in lands contaminated with mines. The rate of casualties from mines has increased over the years. Since the beginning of this year there have been 29 landmine casualties in eastern Ukraine, including 11 civilians and 5 children killed. No country was even close to Ukraine's casualty rate looking back for recent 3,5 years. Since 2014 there were totally 1,796 landmine casualties in eastern Ukraine, including 238 civilians killed and another 491 injured. In Ukraine 43% of casualties were fatal. Severe casualties include children. The recorded incidents refer predominantly along the line of contact between pro-government troops and Russian-backed forces, where military commanders typically restrict demining.

I would like to reiterate that Ukraine fully supports the aspirations of the like-minded states to overcome the humanitarian crisis caused by a large-scale proliferation and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel land mines and also wishes to see the world free of this type of weapons. The relevant activities in Ukraine is performed according to the Plan for arrangement of humanitarian demining works for liberated territories of Donetsk and Lugansk regions, which was approved by the Minister of Defence of Ukraine. Although the Russian aggression against Ukraine is ongoing since 2014, the demining groups comprised of Armed Forces of Ukraine, State Special Service of Transport, State Service of Emergency Situation as well as a range of non-governmental organizations, including The Halo Trust, Danish Demining Group, Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, Demining Team of Ukraine, had already surveyed the liberated parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions destructed over 300 thousands explosives on the area about 25 thousand hectares. Where it is possible, they are working to demine areas behind the current front line, but still are unable to reach the areas proximate to the line - where most of the minefields are - or areas currently held by separatist forces. In order to improve transparency and information exchange Ukrainian authorities in cooperation with the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine are introducing of the project of information management system for mine action. This project allows to optimize the process of data collection for armaments location and activities on humanitarian demining carried out in Ukraine.

Since the Russian annexation of Ukrainian territories, use of landmines by the terrorists has left a deadly legacy buried in Ukrainian fields. According to the estimates, at least 600,000 people are now living in mine-contaminated areas along the 'contact line'. APLs have indiscriminate effect as planted by the Russia-led illegal armed groups in residential areas and routes of communication between inhabited localities. These actions violate the Conventions

and pose more threat to the civil population than to the military personnel. In addition to the bloodshed, entire communities suffer. The enemy has laid land mines, denying people use of land for crops and livestock, and endangering those who gather firewood. Local economies stagnate, damaged infrastructure goes unrepaired, cease-fire monitors are hampered. In this regard we cannot but say with a deep pity that Ukrainian case poses a real obstacle to ensure achieving landmine free status by 2025, as Ukrainian experts believes that demining will take 10 - 15 years at least.

Ukrainian Armed Forces detachments along with relevant non-governmental organizations are tirelessly carrying out awareness-raising activities for more than 25 thousands civilian persons on risks and threats of explosive objects and rules of conduct in the event of their detection, through thematic sessions and interviews with the public and development and dissemination of relevant information materials. Special courses have being introduced in most schools on the territories adjoined to the hostility areas. Despite ongoing demining and mine-risk education efforts, civilians are increasingly caught-up in highly mine-contaminated areas. As biligerent actions continues, humanitarian situation in Ukraine is worsening continuously.

We are grateful to all donors, notwithstanding their governmental or humanitarian origin. In particular, I would like to point out the most recent donation by the Government of Canada to demining programs in Ukraine for 2018-2019 in cooperation with the UNDP branch in Ukraine and the donation by the Government of the Netherlands. Equally, Ukraine is grateful to the Government of Japan for its very useful in-kind contribution made just a week ago. Of course, we are very grateful to non-governmental organizations working in Ukraine, namely The Halo Trust, Danish Demining Group, Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, Demining Team of Ukraine for their tireless, brave, invaluable and selfless activity. In the framework of furthering cooperation and assistance in the field related to the provision of humanitarian demining and clean-up of territories from explosive objects in Donbass region of Ukraine let me inform you that the State Emergency Service of Ukraine in cooperation with international partners nearly finished preparation of Memorandum on cooperation and partnership in the implementation of programs and projects in the field of humanitarian demining and development of the System of Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine. Ukraine uses this opportunity to express its commitment to continue working comprehensively to further develop cooperation with all interested partners.

Mr. President

To conclude I wish to stress that Ukraine stands ready to engage constructively with all partners to improve the current situation and to move closer to the Ottawa Convention 2025 goals, including making essential and needed national input.

I thank you.