

**Statement of the Delegation of Thailand
by H.E. Mr. Sek Wannamethee,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to
the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva
Seventeenth Meeting of States Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, Switzerland
26 November 2018**

Madam President,

On behalf of the Thai delegation, allow me to convey our appreciation to you and your team, as well as to the Implementation Support Unit for the fine arrangements for this meeting. We are confident that your able leadership will bring this meeting to a successful conclusion.

Madam President,

Mine Action is an urgent and important priority for us. Last year at the Meeting of States Parties in Vienna, Thailand requested and was granted a second extension of the deadline for mine clearance for a period of 5 years, starting from the beginning of this month until 31 October 2023. During this time, we commit ourselves to free up the remaining 360 sq. km. or 14 percent of the original contamination we had 20 years ago.

We are determined to complete our mandate but realize that there are no shortcuts to such end. That is why since 2017, we have been undergoing a transition to improve work efficiency along the border areas, which will be our main areas of focus in the years ahead. For instance, we have been engaging in several joint discussions and field visits with our neighbouring counterparts, as well as local border communities, to foster understanding and support for our operations. Furthermore, in September we updated our National Mine Action Strategy (NMAS) to meet the latest international standards, while our personnel have been undergoing intense trainings on Non-Technical Survey (NTS), which reflects our commitment to transition to a Land Release-based centred approach.

Moreover, better synchronization of intra-agency efforts have ensured that all landmine survivors are fully embraced by our universal healthcare system, while Mine Risk Education (MRE) programmes have expanded to reach nearly 40,000 people annually. These efforts, together with an increase in public awareness campaigns and publicity through mainstream media, has caused a major decline in

the number of landmine victims from an average of twenty per year to single digit figures, last year we had zero civilian casualties.

Madam President,

Over the years, the Royal Thai Government has committed significant resources and support for Thailand's demining activities. This reflects our country's strong commitment towards Mine Action, which is one of our top national priorities. Nonetheless, Thailand remains grateful for and continues to be open to all forms of support, especially technical equipment such as mine detectors, body armour, vests and helmets. We take this opportunity to thank the United States, Norway, and Japan, which have been our main donors. Moving forward, we will look into the possibility of seeking sponsorship from the private sector. We are also considering programmes to share our experience and expertise with other States Parties to help improve their capacity for demining and victim assistance. One such area is in the production of affordable artificial limbs that is attainable for all mine victims. In the past, we, through our Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), have assisted other countries, such as Senegal, on this matter, and we are considering further programmes on this matter.

Madam President,

It is vital that we deepen and expand our cooperation on Mine Action with our neighbours. This will be our priority as Chair of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC) in 2019. Furthermore, we place high importance to continue our engagement with the wider international community in various fields. Most recently, we joined hands with renowned artist Gonçalo Mabunda from Mozambique. Mr. Gonçalo, known for transforming war artefacts into masterpieces of art, have begun collaborating with local Thai artist to build sculptures from old guns, bullets, and of course, landmines, which once completed, will be showcased at museums and others public venues to promote peace and disarmament.

Madam President,

The thousands who lost lives and limbs do not tell the full story of anti-personnel landmines. By virtue of their very existence, livelihoods are put at risk. They prevent children from attending school. They prevent farmers from growing crops to feed their families. They prevent socio-economic development that has the potential to lift the well-being of whole communities. Thailand therefore sees merit in viewing Mine Action in a more holistic and comprehensive manner, such as in the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, which explicitly recognizes the nexus between peace and development.

Thailand remains committed to working with the Convention and all States Parties towards our common aspiration of a world free of landmines.

Thank you.
