



Statement by Ambassador Dr. Andrej Benedejčič, Head of Delegation, at the 18th Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, Geneva, 18 November 2020

Mr. President,

Let me start by congratulating Ambassador Mohammed for his dedicated engagement and for ensuring the continuation of the important work on reviewing the progress of the implementation of the Ottawa Convention. Slovenia shares the concern expressed at the opening of this 18th Meeting of States Parties by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the use of improvised explosive devices and "non-persistent" landmines. In addition to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, I would therefore like to make several remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused immense disruptions in the international community. It has not however affected landmines, which continue to represent an enduring threat. It is also for this reason that events like this one are important, so that we can recommit ourselves to our collective goal of creating a mine-free world. In doing so, it is important for my country that equal attention is given to the mutually reinforcing pillars of mine clearance, victim assistance, mine risk education and advocacy.

I am saying this because in Slovenia we know that this approach works in practice. More than two decades ago, my Government established an international trust fund for demining and mine victim assistance. It is now known as ITF Enhancing Human Security and, with the support of numerous international donors, it has made quite an impact, both in our immediate neighborhood and around the world. Even in these challenging times it continues with its risk education efforts, aimed at raising awareness among vulnerable populations, especially children, not only about post-conflict mine danger, but also about COVID-19. In the past year alone, Slovenia has therefore contributed more than 1.3 mio EUR to its various projects.

Let me conclude by reiterating my country's commitment to the vision of a world free of landmines by 2025. The Oslo Action Plan, adopted last year, is an important step towards achieving this goal and making the Ottawa Convention one of the most successful international agreements in the disarmament area. Slovenia will therefore continue to contribute to these efforts, also by financially supporting the important work of the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention.

Thank you.