



STATEMENT BY

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

AFGHANISTAN

H.E. DR. ABDULLAH ABDULLAH

AT THE PLEDGING CONFERENCE OF THE ANTI- PERSONNEL MINE

BAN CONVENTION

GENEVA

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming from a country that has for 4 decades been victim of landmines, I am honoured to be with you here in Geneva, sharing our focus & commitment to prohibit the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines.

I clearly recall when as Foreign Minister back on September 11, 2002, Afghanistan decided to accede to the Convention, which entered into force for the country in March 2003.

My long-standing relation with the Convention is not only Afghanistan-specific, but it also encompasses a global concern, wherever it impacts the lives of human beings who face this terrible device, wherever they may be.

When used, a landmine does not see boundaries, nor does it differentiate between its victims. That is why we need a global perspective and approach to make countries & all armed groups, whatever their affiliation, to realize that it is inhuman and illegal to deploy landmines.

Over the years, we have had successes, but not enough to claim victory and look at it as a relic of times past. Much more needs to be done, and I am glad to see us here discussing the lessons learnt and the way forward.

The Mine Action Program in Afghanistan has cleared 3,000 square kilometers & destroyed over 19 million landmines and explosive remnants of war since the commencement of its humanitarian demining operations in 1989.

We remember and salute all those brave men and women who have given their lives or sustained injuries in the process. We are also grateful to all donor countries and organizations involved in the various facets of the program.

I am here also to inform that we are also committed to completing the destruction of the anti-personnel mines in Afghanistan by March of 2023.

Today, not only does Afghanistan make every effort to deal with the traditional anti-personal mine and unexploded ordinance that were used during the conflicts of the 1980s and 90s.

It is also struggling to counter the use of improvised anti-personnel mines and other Improvised Explosive Device (IED), which is a weapon of choice used by terrorist groups and outfits such as the Taliban and local IS/Daesh cells.

The death toll and suffering caused by IEDs, whether targeting civilians or security personnel, is staggering and should raise many questions about their origins, raw material procurement, transfer and facilitation.

We urge international community to use all legal tools & instruments to not only work on the ban of these devices, but also, investigate and prosecute under international law - when it applies - the suppliers, manufacturers and facilitators of IEDs, whether state or non-state.

Low intensity and regional conflicts in a number of countries around the world require that, as a priority, we strengthen the global norm against anti-personnel mines as we see an increase in the number of victims.

Furthermore, our efforts to raise awareness of this threat through risk education and area clearance remain an important focus of our preventative work. Work at the community level is crucial to our success.

Although impacted communities have over time learned to mitigate the risks, but our goal should be to fully clean up their backyards

and pathways so that children, families and bread-winners do not fall victim.

The same applies to the millions of refugees and displaced people who, for one reason or another, fall victim because of circumstances beyond their control.

We see many such incidents in Afghanistan and other countries, where thousands of families are on the move, either to flee conflict and difficult conditions, or are new returnees, looking to resettle after having spent years as refugees.

To accomplish our benchmarks, we have set ourselves an ambitious goal of addressing the scourge of anti-personnel mines by 2025.

While the Maputo Action Plan has set a road map. It is up to us – countries in a position to provide assistance, as well as affected countries – to study and jointly use this road map to get to our common destination. And in this journey, a major milestone is to protect civilians.

This Convention is not solely about clearing mined areas by 2025, but it is also our wholehearted commitment to protect and to ensure that those who have suffered live a dignified life, able to exercise their human rights as other citizens.

We still have a mighty task ahead of us, but one that has been proven possible by the great achievements we have had together. Our work can be sustained through real partnerships and real commitments.

This means holding each other accountable, for the responsibility of meeting our shared goals since we pledged to “end the suffering and casualties caused by these weapons” by joining this Convention.

This pledging conference ensures that the mechanisms we have set up to support our efforts are fully funded, including the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, the meetings of States Parties of our Convention, and the sponsorship programme.

A serious joint effort together with national authorities, national and international non-governmental organizations such as the HALO Trust, Mines Advisory Group, Norwegian People's Aid that are making progress on the ground, other organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the GICHD, and States in a position to provide assistance are vital to the continued success of our Convention.

I would like to thank you all for your commitment to the Convention and to the support given to Afghanistan in implementing its obligations under the convention.