



Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention 15th Meeting of the States Parties

*Santiago de Chile
28 November - 1 December 2016*

General Exchange

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marco Ricci, Head of the Italian Delegation

Madam President,

Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives and Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me express my gratitude to the Government of Chile for presiding and hosting the 15th Meeting of the State Parties of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention. In extending the congratulations of my Government, I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I would also like to join other delegations in thanking the Convention Committees, the Implementation Support Unit, and civil society for their effective contribution to the preparations for this important meeting.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Madam President,

Seventeen years after the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, significant progress has been made towards the full implementation of its core provisions, but there is still work to be done.

As new challenges emerge – such as those posed by Improvised Explosive Devices, or by non-State actors who continue to produce, use, and stockpile anti-personnel mines - “old” ones need to be conclusively met. We are sure that the 15MSP will be the occasion for us to renew our joint commitment to the goal of a mine-free world, fulfilling the pledge to complete the “last stretch” by 2025, which we all took in Maputo.

Italy has met its Convention obligations at the national level; at the same time, we are keenly aware of the challenges that remain to attain its full implementation at all levels.

For this reason, we continue to attach great importance to our responsibility – enshrined in Article 6 – to provide technical, material and financial assistance to States Parties still affected by antipersonnel mines.

Upon ratification of the Convention, we established a Fund specifically designated to support mine action activities, which we understand in the broadest sense, from clearance of contaminated areas to stockpiles destruction, from victim assistance, to mine-risk awareness. Since the creation of the Fund, we have allocated close to 50m EUR to integrated mine action programmes.

Moreover, we fully share the view that cooperation and assistance does not only consist of financial support, but also includes the sharing of expertise, technical know-how and experience. In this regard, I would like to highlight the extensive clearance of explosive remnants of war conducted by the Italian Armed Forces operating abroad, notably in Afghanistan and Lebanon.

Furthermore, having assumed the Chairmanship of the Mine Action Support Group last January, Italy is fostering coordination and information exchange among donors, in order to make contributions to mine action more efficient and effective.

As a donor Country, Italy attaches the greatest importance to Victim Assistance. We are eager to contribute to the discussions under this topic in the next few days, also in our capacity as Victim Assistance co-coordinator under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. For the moment, let me record our deep appreciation for the work undertaken by the Committee on Victim Assistance and for the “Guidance on Reporting” which its members have developed.

While my delegation will further elaborate on the topic of International Cooperation and Assistance under the related agenda item later this week, let me recall now that gender considerations are an important factor in all Italian-funded mine action activities. We work to ensure that relevant gender – and more broadly all diversity aspects – are taken into account in mine action interventions. A lot has still to be done in this regard. This is why, this year, we have established a partnership with the “Gender in Mine Action Programme” (GMAP), which we hope will be fruitful and long-lasting.

Madam President,

For those States which chose to be bound by the Convention, progress can be hard and sometimes slow, but it is possible. The Convention provides all the enabling conditions to advance in our joint struggle against mines.

Clearing contaminated land will contribute to avoiding the increase in the number of landmine victims. In this regard, compliance with article 5 is key. We understand the challenges faced by affected Countries, and we stand ready to assist them in taking up to their commitments. When deadlines cannot be met, we encourage concerned States to follow the established procedure, by submitting a motivated request for obtaining an extension. Only the framework set to this end by the Convention will allow for the necessary balance between obligations and unforeseen circumstances, preserving the integrity of the Convention itself. We look forward to the discussion on the report by the Committee on article 5.

We are also pleased to take note of progress made so far towards the goal of universalization. However, while we look forward to welcoming Sri Lanka as the 163rd State Party to our Convention, we regret that 34 Countries have not yet ratified or acceded to it, including major possessors and producers.

Reports of alleged or confirmed use of anti-personnel mines further add to the importance of pursuing universal adherence to their prohibition. We remain deeply concerned by such reports and urge all State and non-State actors to refrain from their use.

Madam President,

the process which led us to Ottawa witnessed the pivotal role of civil society, which has continued to make a key contribution in the framework of this Convention. In Italy, there is a strong interaction between Government Authorities and Civil Society in this field. We firmly rely on and deeply value the inputs coming from the National Advisory Committee on Mine Action, which includes all relevant actors, first and foremost Italian NGOs.

Before closing, Madam President,

I would like to highlight that Italy has been a long-standing supporter of the Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We have allocated a substantial voluntary contribution to its activities also in the current year and we are satisfied that the financial difficulties it has recently faced are now overcome, also thanks to the efforts displayed by Chile and by the previous Presidency, Belgium.

However, the issue of funding will remain central to the life of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. A staunch reminder of this has been provided by the financial challenges to the holding of our Meeting we faced this year, which we were able to overcome thanks to your determination and to the constructive cooperation by several States, among which – as you are aware – Italy.

More generally, financial resources – both voluntary funding of the ISU budget, and assessed contributions to cover the expenses of our meetings – are key to the fulfillment of all the obligations set by the Convention. Quoting from the Convention's website, Italy fully shares the view that "assistance and cooperation is about more than just money. It's also about the efficient and effective use of scarce resources". In this regard, we remain convinced that working across instruments that entail similar commitments could prove very valuable. Benefits of exploiting synergies at the operational level, domestic and international, are clear. Indeed, this is already happening, as witnessed, inter alia, by the side event jointly organized by the Ottawa Convention Committee on Victim Assistance, the CCW Protocol V Coordinators on the same topic and the Coordinators on Victim Assistance and Cooperation and Assistance under the Oslo Convention. We stand ready to contributing to further reflection on this subject.

Thank you, Madam President.