

Republic of Iraq

Statement

Sixteenth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention (APLC)

18th – 21st December 2017, Vienna

Mr President,

My delegation would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, and convey our support for your efforts in leading the work of this meeting. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Austria for hosting this meeting and commend the preparations undertaken by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for its ongoing support to states parties to the Convention for convening these meetings. We would also like to congratulate the brotherly Republic of Algeria in declaring its completion of implementing Article 5 of the Convention, and welcome Sri Lanka's accession to the Convention.

Mr President,

The Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention is gaining growing importance in its role as one of the international instruments with a human dimension in saving thousands of lives in societies from the dangers of mines, and its effective work in facilitating assistance and support to victims and their integration into society.

Mr President,

Since my country's accession to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention in 2008 and its entering into force on February 1st 2008, thereby becoming the 155th Member State, Iraq was keen on preparing its national and budgetary plans to ensure the clearance of land and mine-contaminated areas exceeding 2309 square kilometers, when the convention came to enter force. Despite the numerous challenges faced by survey and clearance operations, as well as the magnitude of the contamination problem faced by Iraq that is incommensurate with national capacities, which in turn suffers from a lack of advanced demining and detection techniques to remove and detect mines, in addition to the human and financial resources involved in mine clearance - national efforts and continued international support have nevertheless yielded fruitful results in the clearance and release of many land mine contaminated areas, and has moreover reduced the size of contaminated areas to 1,195 square kilometers.

Mr President,

The attacks launched by the terrorist gangs of Daesh back in 2014 and the subsequent capture of a number of the country's major cities, and their associated criminal practices in those areas, contributed to the increase of the number of areas contaminated by mines and remnants of war and explosive ordinances. After the liberation of all the cities and territories under their control by our heroic armed forces, the Iraqi government began in rebuilding the infrastructure and providing basic services in governmental, health and educational institutions that were destroyed by these terrorist gangs. However, any step aimed at reconstruction requires the initiation of cleaning and cleansing of mines, booby traps, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), other devices and remnants of war - to ensure the safe return of residents to their towns and homes, and so that governmental institutions may practice their work and activities, and for the restoration of stability.

Mr President,

You may share our view that these challenges and difficulties impede the implementation of Iraq's obligations to implement the Conventions provisions, particularly with regard to Article 5. Iraq committed itself to present in April 2017 the extension request for the destruction of mines planted in its territory; to extend the deadline for the destruction of mines in mined areas in accordance with provisions of Article 5, paragraph 3, of APLC. The extension request states all efforts undertaken by the Republic of Iraq over the past years in mine clearance, and reviews the major challenges faced by Iraq's Mine Action Programme. Despite this, national and international efforts were and are still working tirelessly to clear areas contaminated with mines and remnants of war, with a primary focus on residential areas, agricultural land and areas of economic importance.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United States of America, the European Union, Norway, Denmark, Japan, Germany, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and Canada for their continued cooperation and support to the Iraqi Mine Action Programme and the reconstruction of infrastructure in the liberated areas. We also call upon States and organizations to continue providing support in the upcoming period, and to proceed in coordinating and consulting with the Iraqi Government and relevant official bodies to ensure that support and assistance reach the intended beneficiaries, and to achieve the desired goal in the hope of continuing those efforts so as to reach the aim of an Iraq that is free of mines and remnants of war.

We shall like to bring to your kind attention that Iraq will organize a side event today on the sidelines of this meeting on *The Impact of International Cooperation in Iraq's Implementation of the Provisions of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention* at 1 pm, immediately after the plenary meeting in room M5.

Thank you, Mr President