



STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA TO THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

18 December 2017

Mr. President,

May I at the outset congratulate you on behalf of the South African delegation on your Chairmanship of this, the 16th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. My delegation would like to commend you for all the work that has been done in preparation for this meeting. We look forward to constructive discussions, and I can assure you of my delegation's full cooperation throughout these proceedings.

Mr. President

Today as we celebrate this the twentieth anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty, we have to commend the extraordinary dedication of states and civil society to prohibit these inhumane weapons. South Africa is proud of the role that we were able to play in assisting to guide the process to the successful negotiation of the Mine Ban Treaty. The Republic of South Africa was among the first states to have signed the Mine Ban Treaty on 3 December 1997 and subsequently ratified on 26 June 1998, becoming a State Party on 1 March 1999.

The Mine Ban Treaty has been an impressive achievement in the development of international diplomacy, international humanitarian law and disarmament. But the real value of the Treaty has been in the effective implementation of and compliance with the Treaty over the intervening years, the successes achieved in the implementation of the Treaty and the establishment of new international norms in the delegitimising of the use of anti-personnel mines. The vision of a mine-free world will be paved by universal respect for the mine ban norm, and universal adherence to the Treaty. South Africa therefore, recalling the Maputo Action Plan and recognising the progress that has been achieved, joins the call on States that have not yet done so, to accede to the Convention soon as possible.

Mr President

Landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to maim and kill indiscriminately long after hostilities have ended. Most of their victims are civilians and are often disabled for life, adding to the many mine survivors around the world in need of assistance and support.

While we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Treaty, we also have to honour and remember the mine victims and affirm that their needs will never be forgotten. South Africa has always highlighted the challenges mine survivors face which includes long-term care, rehabilitation, social and economic support and other related challenges which stymies their ability to enable them to lead normal lives. The care for these victims should be a long term commitment of States. These actions will ensure that victims of mines are able to fully and effectively integrate and participate in society.

Mr President

South Africa has continued to advance the conviction that international cooperation and assistance remains key for the full and effective implementation of the Convention. The importance of developing real partnerships between affected states and the international community highlights the benefits of multilateralism. We will only be able to achieve the vision of a mine free world if we dedicate ourselves to effective cooperation and coordination with the same vigour as we did 20 years ago in attaining this Treaty.

We hope that this 16th Meeting of States Parties will enable States to evaluate the successes of the Convention but also to recommit ourselves to carefully plan the way forward and provide additional impetus to implement the Maputo Action Plan towards a maximum beneficial humanitarian impact and to achieve the goal of a world-free of mines.

Thank You