

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**H.R.H Prince Mired Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husein,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure to address the 17th 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 here in Geneva.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to the **Secretariat of the Convention** for its excellent work in convening this very important meeting.

I also thank the representatives of the State Parties and those not parties to the convention, as well as the representatives of International Organizations for attending this meeting.

Excellencies,

The 20th anniversary of the adoption of the **Ottawa Convention** last year marked a momentous occasion on multilateral diplomacy on disarmament and - for that matter - a **comprehensive response** to humanitarian situations caused by antipersonnel mines.

During the past two decades, this Convention has proved its significant importance in **mine clearance, victim assistance, stockpile destruction**, and, more broadly, as **an instrument for peace-building**.

Tens of thousands of human lives have been saved since the entry into force of the Convention.

Moreover, the number of States Parties **has increased to 164** and many of them have fulfilled their obligations with respect to **clearance and stockpiles destruction**, aimed at

creating a safer and more secure living environment for all.

At the same time, achieving our overall objective of addressing the challenge of landmines, in all its aspects, **requires more effective and sustained action**, within the framework of a vigorous international effort.

A glimpse of the overall situation with respect to mine clearance shows both significant progress and challenges.

As we speak, large areas across the world remain inaccessible due to **mine contamination**.

Currently, we are **confronting new challenges**, especially in conflict settings, arising from large-scale new contaminations from land mines and other **improvised explosive devices**, including those used by terrorist groups and armed non-State actors.

To combat this threat, we need to raise awareness at national and international levels on the role of mine action programs.

Further, we must also expand networks of partnerships to accelerate mine action efforts.

In this regard, I would like to thank donor countries, international organizations and other partners alike, that have rendered their support and contribution in the key areas of **mine clearance, risk-education, assistance to victims, stockpile destruction, as well as capacity building.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Due to the decades-long cycle of armed conflict, Afghanistan has become **one of the most mine-affected countries** in the world.

Our people have been suffering from the physical and psychological effects of landmines on a daily basis.

In 2017, over 2000 Afghans were killed or injured by landmines and explosive remnants of war. This figure marks a substantial increase in comparison to previous years.

As part of our strong commitment to have a **mine free world**, Afghanistan has been a determined party to the **Ottawa Convention** following our accession to that milestone instrument in September 2002.

In addition to the Ottawa Convention, we have undertaken measures to synergize national priorities and policies on various other international instruments, to enhance our national and global response to address the **threat of landmines and other explosive devices**.

These instruments include the Convention on **Conventional Weapons**, the Convention on **Cluster Munitions**, and the Convention on **Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

Significant efforts have been conducted to make Afghanistan free of land mines, on the basis of the **Mine Action Program of Afghanistan (MAPA)**, which is one of the oldest mine action programs in the world, and is managed by our Disaster Management Authority.

To this end, we are pleased to report that, since demining operations first began in 1989, approximately **3,000 square kilometers** have been cleared and **over 19 million landmines** and explosive remnants of war have been destroyed.

This signifies the positive trajectory in which our mine clearance efforts continues to progress.

We have been working to sustain these gains and are committed to completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in Afghanistan by March 2023.

Our **National Mine Action Program** has also led to the creation of job opportunities for thousands of Afghans resulting in improved livelihood in different parts of the country.

Despite past achievements, the goal of becoming a country free of mines remains a work in progress.

Even though the majority of areas contaminated by mines have been cleared, almost 2,000 square kilometers of land remains contaminated, impacting approximately 1,500 villages in the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Adequate funding for the full implementation of our Mine Action Program remains of crucial importance.

We are grateful for the financial contributions from the broad network of partners for the implementation of our National Mine Action Program.

Yet, funding shortfalls **remains a serious concern**, which has led to a reduction in the number of people employed with MAPA.

To remain on target, we have requested additional financial assistance for clearance activities this year to meet our mine clearance commitments by 2023.

We are optimistic that with the continued support of the international community, we can **mitigate** and **eventually resolve** the threat of landmines.

In doing so, we can transform mine-filled valleys into places where our children are able to walk freely without fear of losing their lives and limbs.

Distinguished delegates,

Afghanistan is not only dealing with anti-personnel **mines** and unexploded ordinances, but also with **improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)**, which are being used by terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan.

Countering the threat of IEDs is another imperative being pursued by Afghanistan, nationally and internationally.

This year, again, Afghanistan was pleased to facilitate the negotiations on the UN General Assembly resolution on

“countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.”

This resolution underscores the importance of a number of key imperatives: strengthening global awareness, information sharing, and increasing involvement of the international community to develop an even more comprehensive approach to counter the growing threat from IEDs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order for the Ottawa Convention to reach its full impact, **universalization** remains of crucial importance.

In this regard, Afghanistan remains a committed party to this Convention and advocates sustained progress on this front.

This year, during our Presidency of the Convention, I have addressed a **personal letter** to the distinguished Foreign

Ministers of the non-State Parties to sincerely encourage their respective Governments to join the Convention.

Therein, I have emphasized how the accession of new state parties will greatly contribute to the universal ratification of the Convention in achieving a mine-free world.

We hope to see a continued increase in the number of countries joining the Ottawa Convention.

In closing, I would like to thank the donor countries, as well as international governmental and non-governmental organizations for their support and valuable contribution in making progress on the ground.

We urge all States that have not yet become party to the Ottawa Convention to do so.

Let us ensure that this year's session marks the start of a new phase of even more tangible international progress in

combating anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war under the **international frameworks and legal instruments**.

Moving forward, Afghanistan will continue to **not only be a reliable partner but a strong advocate and catalyst** in achieving the goals and spirit of the Anti Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Thank you.