

**Address by Ambassador Tomaž Lovrenčič, ITF Director, at 18MSP
Thursday, 19 November, 2020, 10.00-12.00 (9c)**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and immense privilege for me to address you at this 18th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention on behalf of ITF Enhancing Human Security.

ITF greatly appreciates the tremendous humanitarian work and efforts of everyone involved in Mine Action during this unprecedented year of COVID-19 pandemic. 2020 has been especially demanding for countries and communities living in mine affected countries. It has also illustrated the everyday struggles of mine victims - limited access to appropriate healthcare, restricted mobility, psychological distress, and economic hardship to name just a few.

Once again the significance and power of risk education have been displayed. People have sought to spend much more time outside in nature, revealing the crucial importance of knowledge on the presence of explosive ordnance and clearly marked contaminated land. In addition, risk education was capable of incorporating COVID-19 safety messages, multiplying the effect of awareness raising among vulnerable communities.

ITF is very proud to be among the organizations that were able to continue their operational presence on the ground despite this new reality. We are also extremely glad to see that most of the Mine Action community was able to do the same. Landmines and other explosive ordnance remain a significant threat and we must not lose the momentum of achieving our goals despite numerous challenges.

I am honored to announce that in September of this year, the City of Sarajevo was finally declared mine-impact free. This was achieved through great cooperation between ITF and its partners Mine Detection Dog Center in BIH and Marshall Legacy Institute, the local authorities, and generous contribution by the United States of America. Bosnia and Herzegovina is now one step closer to reaching a mine-free status.

ITF is immensely grateful to all of its donors and partners, who make our work possible. They have worked with us throughout this year with patience and understanding, and a common wish for a better future and a mine free world. With new challenges arising, there is much work still to be done. But with strong partnership and shared goals, we are confident that our vision can be achieved.

Thank you.