

BELGIUM

Mine Clearance

APMBC – 19th MSP – November 2021

Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Belgium is **honored** to have become a member of the Committee on Article 5 implementation together with Norway, Sri Lanka and Zambia. We wish to thank the other members of the Committee and the ISU for the work done during this last year.

Throughout the last months, my delegation had the opportunity to engage with a large number of States Parties which still suffer from mine contamination. About 60 countries and territories are **still affected by landmines**, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices that threaten human lives and recovery efforts. Mine clearance is of the **utmost importance in post-conflict situations**, and it is not only a question of peace and security, but also of **social and economic recovery**, as well as of **sustainable development**. Mine clearance has therefore to be seen as a prerequisite for stabilization and recovery.

Most of the States Parties we engaged with, are facing technical difficulties, as well as a **lack of resources**. Covid-19 increased scarcity in resources both for affected States and donors States. However, our common aim to have a mine-free world requires all States Parties to **keep maintaining a high level of involvement**. In this regard, Belgium is pleased to confirm that, this year, it is donating another two million EUR to the mine clearance efforts of UNMAS in Iraq and Syria.

The **increased use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature**, mainly by non-state actors, poses a **significant challenge** for article 5 implementation. The diversity and increased sophistication of these IEDs render **detection and demining more complex and time-consuming**. We need to sustain our efforts to identify efficient, safe, and cost-effective solutions to counter the risks they pose. Information-sharing plays an important role in this regard, in particular by operators in the field, whether they are NGO's, state authorities, private actors or peacekeeping missions.

My delegation would like to **thank** Cyprus, the DRC, Guinee-Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria, Somalia and Turkey for their Article 5 extension requests and their engagement with the Committee in the extension request process. We especially **welcome the efforts made by Guinee-Bissau, Mauritania and Nigeria**, which

submitted an extension request to the Article 5 Committee concerning unknown mine contamination discovered following their declaration of completion. These countries should receive the **full support of States Parties** in order for them to fulfill their demining obligations.

Finally, we remain concerned that, despite the efforts undertaken by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, the Coordination Committee, the present and former Chair of our Convention, the ISU and the Delegation of the European Union in Asmara, **Eritrea** has still not submitted a request for extension of its mine clearance deadline (31.12.2020) and is therefore in a situation of non-compliance since then. While we still hope Eritrea will actively engage with the Convention, we have to admit that there currently is no longer a **cooperative dialogue** with Eritrea, as foreseen in article 8§1 of our Convention.

Thank you Mr. Chair.