

Opening remarks by Dr. Barbara Haering, GICHD President

Opening Ceremony of the Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, 15 November 2021

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear Colleagues,

The unprecedented pandemic challenge puts our capabilities and our resilience to the test. However, we can be proud of the flexibility and adaptability that our institutions and our coworkers have shown throughout the past eighteen months, allowing us to continue working towards our common goals. On this note, all my gratitude goes to the Dutch Presidency, the Coordinating Committee and the ISU for their efforts to organize this 19th Meeting of the States Parties of the APMBC in hybrid format.

Our Mission: A Mine-free World

Unfortunately, the need for mine action is not diminishing. I don't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Thus, our determination remains strong. Our work on the ground, close to the lives of the people we want to protect, is fundamental. Let us benefit from the Nineteenth MSP as a booster for an even intensified commitment in the future. Following the path drawn by the 4th Review Conference, this MSP will take important decisions for our efforts towards achieving a mine-free world. As a competence center, the GICHD greatly welcomed the Dutch Presidency's focus on capacity building, inclusivity and innovation. These priorities mirror our domains of expertise.

Capacity Development

Capacity development is key. Close to four decades of field operations have taught us so. Local capacities institutionally supported and adequately equipped with human, technical and financial resources are a precondition for effective, efficient and sustainable mine action programmes. Moreover, capacity development is a long term effort. Staff rotates, priorities shift, and funding cycles go through times of expansion or reduction. Even then, we are all responsible to assure adequate capabilities to fully achieve the implementation of the APMBC, under the leadership of affected States. Developing national capacities strengthens national ownership and fosters local empowerment, following the important paradigm of "as local as possible and as international as necessary".

Gender and Diversity

Moreover, mine action will only be effective if it integrates the needs of diverse groups of people in affected communities. Explosive ordnance impacts everyone, but not in the same way. Thus, we must continue to mainstream gender and diversity in our strategies, plans and

implementation activities. This will also strengthen the contribution of mine action to broader processes addressing humanitarian protection, development and peace for all, as a catalyst and enabler. In recent years, the GICHD has developed several initiatives to strengthen the gender and diversity mainstreaming capacity of mine action stakeholders, including National Mine Action Authorities. In 2019, we launched our first Gender Focal Point Capacity Development Programme, which provides key stakeholders with the knowledge, tools, and skills to achieve their own gender and diversity mainstreaming objectives over time. We have already seen concrete and tangible results, for example with partners in Colombia, Cambodia, Iraq, and Lebanon.

Technology and Innovation

Earlier this month, the GICHD and UNMAS jointly hosted the Eighth Mine Action Technology Workshop in Geneva, bringing together some 170 experts from across the world. Technology and innovation support the performance of our sector. Innovation can be about devising new systems or methodologies and just as well about new ways of implementing existing solutions. We keep on exploring both paths, pushing boundaries with innovation and, at the same time, capitalizing on lessons learnt.

By Practitioners for Practitioners

Our colleagues at the forefront of developing new technologies and methodologies benefit from such platforms to exchange knowledge and to share ideas. Gatherings developed by practitioners for practitioners, connecting end-users and national authorities with innovators and donors are key to further our sector's innovation and performance. Thus, let us invest adequate resources to leverage the potential of technology and innovation in the pursuit of our goals.

Implementing the Oslo Action Plan

This MSP is also tasked to assess progress towards implementation of the Oslo Action Plan. Two years ago, we set an ambitious, yet realistic plan, and we provided this plan with a robust framework to monitor its implementation. Thus, we will be able to identify where improvements or adaptations are required. This results-based approach will strengthen the quality, the effectiveness and the efficiency of our work. Let us take full advantage of this approach and let us discuss what works and what not in order to become more effective, more efficient and more sustainable – for the sake of mine affected communities.

On that note, I wish us all a productive nineteenth MSP.

Barbara Haering, President of the Council of Foundation of the GICHD