



ICRC

Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction

**Speech by Dr Gilles Carbonnier, ICRC Vice-President
15 November 2021, The Hague**

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to speak to you on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at the opening of this Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Over the past 24 years, the collective and sustained efforts of States, international organizations and civil society have made the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention one of the most successful weapons treaties in history. It has played an important role in reducing civilian harm, enabling humanitarian access to communities and making them safer. Productive agricultural land has been reclaimed, and refugees and those displaced by conflict have been able to return home to rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

There is much to celebrate. Since its entry into force in 1999, the Convention has helped reduce the number of civilian casualties of anti-personnel mines by 90%. Over 80% of the world's countries are party to the Convention. The legal trade in anti-personnel mines has virtually ceased and more than 55 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed, with 31 States Parties having completely cleared mines from their territory.

However, we are not there yet. Challenges in the universalization and implementation of the Convention persist:

- The number of casualties remains high. According to the Landmine Monitor Report, there were more than 7,000 casualties of mines and explosive remnants of war recorded in 2020 – a sharp increase compared with the 2019 figure. Civilians accounted for at least 80% of these casualties.
- There has been no new State Party to the Convention in the last four years, with 33 States still not party to the Convention, several of which hold large stockpiles of anti-personnel mines.
- Some of the 34 States still implementing their mine clearance obligations are behind schedule.

In countries around the world, the ICRC bears witness every day to the appalling legacy of anti-personnel mines on individuals and communities. I recently learned the story of Ma Su Hlaing, a young widow from Myanmar's Chin State. She was heavily pregnant when her

husband and brother-in-law went to the mountains near their home to gather medicinal herbs. The two men never returned. They had triggered landmines in the forest and died from their injuries. With the family's breadwinner gone and two children to support, Ma Su Hlaing faced a life of poverty until the ICRC stepped in with a cash grant that enabled her to provide for her family.

Given the human cost of anti-personnel mines, it is essential that States Parties maintain the momentum of the Oslo Action Plan and work resolutely to achieve the Convention's ambition of a world free of landmines:

- States Parties must increase their efforts to promote universal adherence to the Convention and they must urge all States and parties to armed conflict to already now renounce the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines.
- Mine action must be evidence based in order to ensure an effective response to the problems communities face. Better data gathering is needed if humanitarian and development responses to address mine contamination are to be properly informed, coordinated and planned.
- Mine action must "do no harm" to the communities and areas where contamination exists, which includes mitigating any adverse environmental impacts of mine clearance operations.
- For mine risk education to be effective, raising awareness must be coupled with actions that enable affected communities to live more safely in contaminated areas and these activities should be incorporated into longer-term livelihoods programmes.
- The needs of mine victims must always be at the centre of any mine action designed to reduce their suffering. The lifelong needs of survivors and their families must be met – taking into account gender, age and diversity factors – to allow them to participate fully, equally and effectively in society.
- To ensure a national response capacity in the long term, close collaboration is required between all relevant institutions at national and local levels, together with substantial and consistent support from those States and organizations that are in a position to provide assistance, both financially and technically.

Mr President,

The ICRC and the wider International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are committed to working with States and partner organizations in advancing the Convention's goals. Our specific role in developing and implementing international humanitarian law means we maintain a close dialogue with States and can provide appropriate support for the universalization and implementation of the Convention. Working closely with national and local authorities, we undertake a range of initiatives to prevent and address the effects of mines, including awareness-raising, risk mitigation, physical rehabilitation and support for the social and economic inclusion of survivors.

We are not over the finish line yet, but the end is in sight and, with sustained effort and a collective will, we can build on the existing successes of the Convention, tackle ongoing challenges and ultimately achieve our shared goal of a mine-free world.

Thank you.