



Statement by Dr. Andrej Benedejčič, Ambassador for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, at the Nineteenth 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, 15 November 2021

Mr. President,

Let me start by expressing my sincere gratitude to you, Ambassador Gabriëlse and your team, as well as to the Implementation Support Unit for all the work you have put in the preparation of this annual meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. Your efforts are all the more impressive in light of the challenges presented by the on-going pandemic. I therefore congratulate you for having been able to organize this important gathering at short notice in virtual format.

Mr. President,

My country has a long record of strong support for the Ottawa Convention, which we regard as an important international agreement in the disarmament area. As such, it requires our collective adherence to its letter and spirit. In addition to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, I would therefore like to make several additional remarks, both in my national capacity and as a representative of the current Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

First, in our view, we need to reengage in promoting adherence to the international mine action "acquis". As noted in the Report of the UN Secretary-General (A/76/283), significant gaps remain in the universalization of, reporting on and compliance with international legal instruments relating to mine action. Slovenia regrets that in the last two years no new ratifications of the Ottawa Convention took place. We therefore call on all countries, which still have not become States Parties, to take concrete steps towards accession.

Second, we need to recommit to our collective aspiration of a world free of landmines. Although the pandemic has slowed down its operations, the demining sector has managed to adapt to the new reality. We therefore believe that our goal of a mine-free world by 2025 is still attainable. Reaching it would not only be important for global peace and security, but for the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well. I would therefore like to commend all State Parties that are making the extra effort to complete their mine clearance obligations as early as possible.

Mr. President,

On behalf of Slovenia, I would like to bring to your attention the issue of landmine casualties. The significant danger posed by antipersonnel mines and explosive ordnance continues in different parts of the world. We are concerned about the trend of a higher number of victims and find the increasing use of improvised landmines especially worrisome. Additional efforts are required to ensure an adequate regional and global response to this challenge. One of the ways to address it is for the State Parties to start reporting on this aspect in their yearly reports.

In addition, I would also like to address the importance of mine action in counter-terrorism. The Slovenian experience from North-East Syria is that humanitarian demining and the reclaiming of agricultural land represent an important deterrent to radicalization. That is why we will continue supporting the activities of organizations, such as the Slovenia-based ITF Enhancing Human Security, which is active in the Al-Hasakah region with the project "Clear then Grow". It not only addresses the challenge that pollution by explosive devices represents to farming, but also various security threats arising from the deepening economic crisis, as well as the lack of opportunities and alternatives for the working-age population, especially women. It is also for this reason that Slovenia supports the recent call of the International Committee of the Red Cross, delivered during the Sixth Committee Plenary Meeting of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, to ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not negatively impact humanitarian action. We agree that this could have unintended adverse consequences, including for mine action, which need to be avoided.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate that Slovenia has always attached great importance to mine victim assistance, which for us represents one of the core objectives of the Ottawa Convention. Taking into account the long-term nature of this commitment, our efforts should remain concentrated on ensuring social and economic inclusion and full participation of mine survivors in all spheres of society on an equal footing. Slovenia will continue to support States Parties in the implementation of their mine-victim assistance programs, with a particular emphasis on medical and psychosocial rehabilitation of victims, in particular children.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of Slovenia to our collective goal of a world free of landmines. We will continue engaging actively in the global efforts to eliminate these silent killers for good. We will also remain a strong backer of the Implementation Support Unit of the Ottawa Convention, including through voluntary contributions.

Thank you.