



19th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty  
The Hague, Netherlands

## **Mine Action Fellows Youth Statement to the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty**

Thank you Mr. President. I am speaking on behalf of the Mine Action Fellows, a group of over sixty youth disarmament campaigners from around the world who are passionate about eliminating the use of landmines, in addition to supporting survivors and their communities. I would like to thank the Governments of Canada, Switzerland, and Sweden for their contributions to this program this year and the Dutch presidency for their open communication with us. As we approach the end of 19MSP, I would like to share what the youth have seen this year.

As youth working on the ground, we have seen the enormous impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on mine action activities, including decreases to victim assistance, risk education, and our participation as members of civil society. This is an incredibly worrying trend. While COVID-19 has complicated how we must approach our work, it has not changed the fact that landmine contamination exists and people continue to be in harm's way. This means we all must continue our efforts with ambition.

We have seen the individual stories behind the increasing numbers of landmine victims reported in the Landmine Monitor. My country, Colombia, recorded an increased number of casualties over the past three years and we are not alone. The Mine Action Fellow from Azerbaijan shared concerns that despite the intensive demining in her country after last year's conflict, there has not been the same level of attention paid to victim assistance for the ongoing casualties. Our members from DR Congo and Iraq echoed these worries and emphasized the dangers that improvised mines also cause. Members have also noticed that when there are victim assistance programs, men are more often included in income generating programs for victims; please ensure these programs reach all groups.

Some key mine action donors have announced cuts to mine action funding and we are seeing the impact of this with our life-saving work being reduced and in some cases our employment being jeopardized. We want to keep our communities safe so please maintain your commitment by at least continuing funding, if not increasing it.

We have also been watching throughout this MSP. While we applaud the progress that has been made, we also know that further action must be taken to achieve the goal of a mine free world by 2025. An unacceptable number of States Parties to this Convention have failed to provide timely transparency reports, which erodes the strength of the commitments States have made and the spirit of this treaty. Convention obligations, such as transparency, should not be taken lightly - they are legally binding.

We have also seen the delay in taking action to bring all States Parties into compliance with their commitments under this Convention. We agree with the ICBL's call for more immediate action to be taken in regards to Eritrea under Article 8. This provision was included in the Mine Ban Treaty for a reason, and is to be used in situations of non-compliance. The longer we wait, the more dire the situation becomes for individuals in Eritrea, but also for the strength of the Convention.

To help us achieve our goal of a mine free world in 2025 and to end the suffering caused by landmines, we must see the following in 2022.

- A strong focus on victim assistance and risk education, with an emphasis on the specific needs of all genders, ages and aspects of identity; while ensuring the meaningful inclusion of these groups
- A commitment to base interventions on strong evidence and needs assessments.
- An increase in mine action funding. The global landmine problem can be solved with proper investment. Safety is the most precious need citizens require from their governments so invest in it.
- Efforts to ensure our work in mine action benefits the environment as climate changes poses a threat to all of us, but specifically to us as youth
- The inclusion of youth in all decision making spaces.
- And, dialogues with users of mines even if they are non-state actors and with all states outside the treaty encouraging them to join it, which strengthens the norm and saves lives.

As youth working, studying or volunteering in mine action, many of us are on the ground in affected communities implementing the decisions you make here. We want to see ambitious decisions from you to match our ambition to protect ourselves and our communities.

2025 is fast approaching so on behalf of my peers around the world I ask, how will you help finish the job on landmines?

Thank you.