

## Statement by Mr Matthieu Laruelle, EORE Advisor

### “Clearing mined areas and mine risk education and reduction” 20MSP APMBC, Geneva, 21-25 November 2022

Mr. President,

Clearance methods, tools and approaches have evolved considerably since the early demining initiatives, aiming to safety, efficiency and effectiveness while also adapting to changing operational contexts and challenges. Moving towards the collective aspiration of a mine-free world, we believe it would be useful to focus on three interlocking issues that are complex yet should be considered and addressed effectively to allow affected States to confidently make relevant decisions.

First, the GICHD continues to underline the importance of the concept of All Reasonable Effort as the bedrock for planning in land release. Let me reiterate that ARE does not in any way intend to diminish our collective commitment towards a mine-free world and should not be understood as a weakening of the Convention’s art. 5 provisions. ARE simply means that every State needs to define what “reasonable” means based on its own specific context, providing the basis for clearance operations using evidence, and allowing them to confidently sign off on cleared land.

The GICHD continues to help the sector understand and apply this notion. In April 2022, the Centre hosted the first global ARE workshop involving representatives from national authorities and international non-governmental organisations. A further workshop on this issue focusing on the Southeast Asian region is being planned for early 2023.

The second issue, connected to the notion of ARE, relates to liability in the MA sector. This issue has often been raised, together with a call for clarifying who is responsible for the different parts of the MA programme cycle. The GICHD has conducted initial work on this topic in Afghanistan and is now planning on piloting a guide on how States can develop legally sound liability frameworks applied to the case of Lebanon. More information on this project will be shared in due course.

Finally, it is important for States to consider and plan in advance how they intend to address residual contamination, once ARE has been applied. Early planning will allow putting in place the necessary structures and processes, both operational and legal, to ensure that any residual contamination is addressed safely, effectively and efficiently. The GICHD is currently assisting States that are interested in better understanding how to manage residual contamination through workshops and direct support.

Mr President,

The 25th anniversary of the Convention is an opportunity to reflect on the role of risk education as a key activity that contributes to the protection of communities from explosive ordnance. In emergency contexts like Ukraine, Nigeria or Ethiopia and during conflicts, when people are on the move or when

clearance is not yet possible, risk education is a true life-saving activity. Sometimes, it is the only humanitarian mine action activity possible. Even after full clearance of all known contaminated areas, risk education is still important to address 'residual threats'.

EORE practices have evolved vastly since the adoption of the Convention. In recent years, practitioners have increasingly drawn on new technologies to better reach communities through diverse media tools. They have also worked more closely with other sectors to deliver safe alternatives when risk education is not sufficient. More recently, efforts have been made to learn more from the Social and Behaviour Change sector to determine and address barriers to safe behaviours and empower individuals and communities.

To continue professionalising the sector and respond to the protection needs of affected communities, affected States Parties should ensure that risk education is embedded in national mine action strategies and plans, that EORE national standards and SOPs are in place based on the latest standards and good practice and that sufficient resources – time, human and financial – are dedicated to EORE programming and interventions.

The GICHD will continue to provide support in this area both individually and as part of the EORE AG. In addition to the delivery of support to national authorities in highly affected countries and other partners, the Centre will develop, launch and translate in multiple languages a comprehensive e-learning course for EORE practitioners. The Centre will also focus on documenting gaps or trends in the sector with a view to developing and promoting innovative EORE responses to address challenges faced by EORE practitioners.