



**European Union**

**Twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties**

**Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**

**Geneva, 20-24 November 2023**

**Statement on Mine Clearance (art. 5)**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on the behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania<sup>1</sup> and Ukraine, as well as the potential candidate country Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Mr. President,

The European Union would like to thank the Committee for its work with regard to the implementation of Article 5 and related mine clearance actions of the Oslo Action Plan.

The EU has continued and will continue, through policy and funding, to support mine clearance activities to help mine-affected States Parties meet their Article 5 obligations under the Convention.

The EU and its Member States have a long history of support for mine action that benefits heavily mine-affected countries and regions of the world. The EU is the world's second largest donor, having contributed over 800 million EUR to humanitarian mine action over the past 6 years, with 90 million EUR in 2022 only. It supports various programmes in 20 mine-affected countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan (risk education, victim assistance and mine clearance), Colombia (mine clearance and rehabilitation of former combatants), Libya, Somalia, Ukraine and Yemen.

We will continue to support these States as they revise or develop inclusive national action plans. The EU hopes that the collective European commitment will promote accession of the supported States not yet Party to the Ottawa Convention. Only by renouncing the use, stockpile, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, we can achieve a mine-free world.

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<sup>1</sup> North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

An additional programme of up to 25 million EUR was adopted to support Ukraine's demining of the territories liberated from Russian occupation. In response to the significant emerging needs, the Ukrainian authorities run extensive survey and clearance activities and need to ensure compliance with international mine action standards, requiring important planning and coordination capacities as well as specialised expertise and demining equipment. This new action underlines once more that the EU will stand by Ukraine for as long as it takes also in tackling the long-term consequences of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.

Mr. President,

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of anti-personnel landmines, in particular by Russian forces in Ukraine causing civilian casualties and suffering, as well as disrupting food and energy production. Anti-personnel landmines pose a long-lasting threat to civilians and hinder humanitarian access. Their use anywhere, anytime, and by any actor remains completely unacceptable to the European Union.

We condemn Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. This war of aggression is not only a blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter but also a humanitarian catastrophe for Ukraine and its people brought about by the Russian Federation in flagrant disrespect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We call on Russia to immediately stop its war of aggression against Ukraine and demand the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal from the entire territory of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

The EU would like to express its strong support towards the States Parties that are making efforts to complete mine clearance operations, to the fullest extent possible by 2025, to bring us closer to the fulfilment of our shared goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines. Significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan in that regard, and we must redouble our efforts to meet the challenges that remain.

Mr. President,

Over the course of the Convention's history, we have witnessed an increase in repeated extensions, missed deadlines, delayed implementation and non-implementation of commitments. The EU reminds all States that Article 5 deadline extension requests should be considered an exceptional measure, and to make every effort to complete their obligations under the Treaty in full and on time. The EU acknowledges and values the effort and commitment in that regard by many States. As set out in Actions 23 and 24 of the Oslo Action

Plan, extension requests should contain detailed, costed and multi-year work plans for the extension period and plans for context-specific mine risk education and reduction in affected communities. Providing such detail gives States Parties confidence that the extension request is realistic and implementable. The failure to implement clearance obligations under the Convention and to regularly communicate progress has significant humanitarian and socio-economic impacts. In this regard, the EU welcomes President's efforts and engagement with Eritrea with the aim of facilitating its return to full compliance with the Convention.

Also in the context of the consideration of the activities of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, the EU welcomes the commitment of the Committee to continue strengthening the Article 5 extension request process and adherence to the relevant actions of the Oslo Action Plan. In this regard, we welcome the paper on the extension request process prepared by the Committee and the recommendations contained therein, in particular the need to strengthen the cooperation between Committee on article 5 and Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance, as well the importance to strengthen the dialogue with expert organisations working in the domain of mine clearance. We would welcome the opportunity to continue discussing the recommendations in the run up to the Review Conference in 2024.

Thank you, Mr. President