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**Statement by Mr Pedro Basto, Programme Manager, Research and
Innovation, GICHD**

“Clearing mined areas and mine risk education and reduction”

21MSP APMBC, Geneva, 20-24 November 2023

Thank you, Mr. President,

Dear colleagues and friends,

As we reflect on the strides made in the release of contaminated land, now is an opportune moment to delve into the significant progress achieved and, particularly, the transformative role of innovation within our sector. The power of innovation extends its influence across both land release and risk education, a fact underscored during the recent Innovation Conference organized by the GICHD, which drew the participation of over 300 stakeholders. Together, we defined innovation as concerted efforts driving progress, improvement, and learning by addressing real, evidence-based needs and providing sustained value.

Innovation, as we have observed, can manifest as continuous improvement—a persistent commitment to enhancing products, processes, or services. Notable examples in our sector include the formulation of national Mine Action strategies and National Mine Action Standards (NMAS), alongside the regular review and update of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). Moreover, innovation can take on a disruptive form, signalling a complete reimagining of established practices within a sector. Mine action itself experienced such a transformation with the introduction of the Land Release concept, reshaping the sector's approach to clearance.

Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) has witnessed the dawn of digital and mobile technological innovation as a game-changer. With the widespread availability of smartphones and the internet, EORE practitioners can now disseminate critical lifesaving information to individuals and communities affected by explosive ordnance, fostering behavioural change where it is needed most. Digital risk education, complementing interpersonal approaches,

plays a pivotal role by offering interactive and engaging content, including lessons, videos, and quizzes, thereby making EORE interventions more accessible and impactful.

Beyond these tangible instances of innovation, the potential for further innovation within our sector is abundant and critical for several reasons.

Firstly, today's conflicts are increasingly complex and protracted, generating new contamination that adds to the global legacy of conflicts long past. Innovative products and processes are essential to not only keep pace with these challenges but also proactively mitigate their impact on our work. Despite facing complex challenges beyond our control, innovation is the linchpin that will help us stay abreast of these challenges and proactively counter their impact on our work.

Secondly, as the challenges in our sector multiply, funding remains a constant constraint. With the sector heavily reliant on donor funding, primarily from a few dedicated State donors, the funding envelope has remained static at around 500-600 million USD per year over the last decade. Innovative finance solutions can bridge this funding gap, ensuring that no mine-affected country is left behind, a critical endeavour given that over 60 countries and territories worldwide are contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Thirdly, technological and methodological advances within the sector are constant, and embracing them is paramount. Innovations like remote sensing and artificial intelligence can significantly aid our work, forming part of a comprehensive toolbox where diverse tools and methods can be adapted to respond effectively to specific contexts. Failure to capitalize on these advances and resistance to change may hinder our sector from making our work safer and ultimately more efficient.

In conclusion, our collective power can transform innovation into tangible, real-world solutions that change lives and create a safer, more secure world for all. The key for this to succeed is for everyone to work TOGETHER. As we continue our efforts, let us keep in mind that the impact of our collective actions extends far beyond these walls, reaching communities in need and aspiring towards a future free from the threat of landmines and explosive ordnance.

Thank you.