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Opening remarks by Dr Barbara Haering,  
President of the Council of Foundation of the GICHD,  
21MSP APMBC, Geneva, 20 November 2023

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is at the core of our commitment to reduce the horrors of landmines, to ensure safety and dignity of countless individuals and to support the sustainable development of communities around the world. That's why the annual States Parties Meeting is so important. My thanks to you all for contributing to our common work.

Persistent as well as new conflicts; legacies as well as significant new contamination threaten people around the world. Our responsibility therefore is clear: we are here to assure compliance with the norms of the Convention and to strengthen efforts towards its full implementation. At the same time, we must pursue its universalisation.

The Oslo Action Plan is an ambitious and realistic roadmap, guiding us towards a robust implementation of the Convention. Moreover, the Oslo Action Plan identifies indicators to measure progress as well as shortcomings. At the GICHD we have learned, to what extent a result-based management enhances a risk-based approach and strengthens the effectiveness and efficiency of our work. A relevant and accurate monitoring framework helps identifying success factors as well as obstacles, allows for evidence-based decision-making and drives improvements needed. Thus, let us exchange insights and feedback in view of an efficient and effective monitoring framework to support the development and the implementation of the next Action Plan.

As we approach the Fifth Review Conference, it is crucial to discuss what works and to identify areas that need strengthening or prioritization. The GICHD supports the priorities set by the Presidency: to strive for the universalization of the Convention, to focus on improvised antipersonnel mines, and to foster individualized approaches to specific challenges, while sharing experience and cooperation.

We also subscribe to the Presidency's emphasis on gender and diversity; it reflects commitments made by States Parties during the Fourth Review Conference. Since then, progress has been made and national capacities have been strengthened, to assure gender and diversity mainstreaming as well as the promotion of equality and inclusion. We will continue to monitor the representation of women at the Convention's meetings and as beneficiaries of mine action activities. At the same time, we must also ensure that people of diverse backgrounds and identities are involved in identifying our strategies.

At the GICHD we have been exploring unintended negative consequences of mine action on the environment, as well as the transformative potential of interventions in view of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Just recently, we conducted a study on mine action, climate change and resilience, and we will share the findings during this Meeting. We, therefore, welcome the integration of environmental concerns into implementation efforts. Of course, humanitarian demining is primarily about mitigating humanitarian consequences of explosive ordnance. However, broadening our perspectives and considering the connections among humanitarian action, environmental concerns, and sustainable development supports peace efforts within the Triple Nexus approach.

It is our joint responsibility to keep attention high and assistance adequate, to provide mine affected States with targeted support enabling them to get rid of contamination as soon as possible. As funding falls short and our working environment becomes increasingly complex, difficult, and dynamic, we need to focus to ensure the efficiency of demining operations. Moreover, we need to explore new approaches and technologies leveraging our impact. The GICHD Innovation Conference 2023, held in Geneva last week, was an opportunity to showcase new technologies, to discuss multifaceted challenges and to build up new partnerships in view of innovative solutions across the mine action sector. Innovation depends on a joint engagement of expertise, investors, and communities sharing their needs, their knowledge and asking the right questions.

In closing, I would like to thank the German Presidency and the Implementation Support Unit for their dedication in steering the work of our community throughout this year. Let us draw strength from our shared commitment, expertise, and knowhow. In this sense, I wish us all a successful and fruitful twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties. Thank you.