



Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production
and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction



Geneva and Accra 18 December 2023

To: **All Permanent Missions of West African and Sahel-Region States Parties with representation before the UN Office at Geneva or in New York, and relevant Diplomatic Missions in Ghana**

Mine Action Authorities and/or National Small Arms Commissions of West African and Sahel-Region States Parties

Relevant States in a position to provide assistance and international and non-governmental organisations

Excellencies, Esteemed Colleagues,

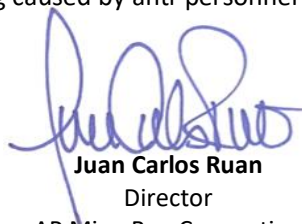
Further to the announcement made in November by the Delegation of the Republic of Ghana during the Twenty-First Meeting of the States Parties in Geneva and the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production, Stockpiling, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction*, it is our pleasure to **invite your State / organisation to attend a regional conference on the need to address the humanitarian impact of improvised anti-personnel mines in West Africa and the Sahel Region within the framework of the Convention, to take place from 13-15 February 2024 in Accra, Ghana.**

In 2019, the Convention adopted the *Oslo Declaration on a Mine-Free World* noting on numerals 5 and 6, that “while we are proud of our joint achievements, many challenges remain. Contamination by anti-personnel mines, **including those of an improvised nature**, continues to pose a threat to human life and impede sustainable development. [...] The high number of injuries and deaths is a stark reminder of the continued relevance of the Convention. We will continue and strengthen our efforts to stigmatise and end the use of these weapons banned under the Convention, **including new use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature, for which all the Convention’s provisions apply.**”

In this context, there is renewed interest to address the devastating humanitarian effects that these weapons are having in places such as West Africa and the Sahel region. The regional conference would therefore provide the opportunity for a technical discussion on best practices and lessons learnt in addressing the humanitarian impact of improvised anti-personnel mines in a comprehensive manner within the framework of the Convention and tools to do so.

The conference will take place at an important junction in the life of the Convention, in particular as States Parties prepare for the *Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World* (November 2024). The conference will provide a good opportunity to measure progress and feed into the development of a new action plan for consideration for the period of 2025-2029. Thanks to a global project sponsored by the Council of the European Union (EU) to support implementation of the Convention, a limited number of full sponsorships will be awarded to guarantee representation of state and civil society organisations in these regions.

We avail ourselves of this opportunity to present your State/organisation the assurance of our highest consideration and look forward to welcoming you in Accra where together we can take further action to fulfil the Convention’s promise to end the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.


Juan Carlos Ruan
Director

AP Mine Ban Convention
Implementation Support Unit



Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

Chemin Eugène Rigot 2C | P.O. Box 1300 | 1211 Geneva 1 | Switzerland | t. + 41 (0)22 730 93 66
f. + 41 (0)22 730 93 62 | isu@apminebanconvention.org | www.apminebanconvention.org

**Regional Conference on Addressing Improvised Anti-Personnel Mines Within the Context of the
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction
[13-15 February 2024 – Accra, Ghana]**

* Information as of 21 December 2023

The Convention is the cornerstone of the international effort to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. Critical in achieving this end is the implementation of the mine clearance commitments enshrined in Article 5 which commits States Parties to achieve three key objectives:

- To make every effort to identify all areas under its jurisdiction or control in which antipersonnel mines are known or suspected to be emplaced;
- To ensure the effective exclusion of civilians, until all anti-personnel mines contained therein have been destroyed; and
- To destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control.

Since its entry into force on 1 March 1999, 164 States have joined the Convention including all States in Sub-Saharan Africa and two in North Africa. While progress has been made in the implementation of the mine clearance commitments of the Convention, with 30 States Parties having declared completion, **the use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature by armed non-state actors has exacerbated the problem.**

In many cases, the use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature is taking place in States Parties that previously did not have an obligation under Article 5; and in other cases, in States Parties that had declared completion of their Article 5 obligations and are now affected by this type of weapon. This particular is seen in the West Africa and the Sahel Region.

In recognising the threat presented by anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature, the Convention's Oslo Action Plan recalls the importance of States Parties affected by improvised anti-personnel mines applying *"all provisions and obligations under the Convention to such contamination as they do for all other types of anti-personnel mines, including during survey and clearance in fulfilment of Article 5 and disaggregate by types of mines when reporting in fulfilment of Article 7 obligations."*

Given the dimension of the impact of improvised anti-personnel mines on the peace, security, and development in western African and Sahel region states, addressing the threat of improvised anti-personnel mines is critical. It is therefore the intent of the Republic of Ghana through its National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons, together with the Convention's Implementation Support Unit to provide a regional platform for West African and Sahel-region States Parties to exchange information on the humanitarian and development impact of improvised anti-personnel mines and the need to address these weapons under the Convention's framework.

The regional conference will be held thanks to support provided by a Decision adopted by the European Union Council (2021/257) to among other objectives, back "dialogue and actions that can contribute to establishing sustainable national capacities to address previously unknown mined areas; increase regular dialogue with stakeholders; and explore opportunities for cooperation (international, regional, triangular, and south-south) to address remaining challenges". The Decision places special emphasis on the reporting of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature.

The conference will provide an opportunity for States Parties in the region to:

- Gain an [increased] understanding of the threat concerning contamination by anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature;

- Raise awareness of the obligations under the Convention and other important understandings adopted by States Parties pertaining to anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature;
- Gain an increased understanding of the efforts in the region to address the humanitarian impact of these weapons;
- Provide an overview of lessons learnt and best practices (e.g. information management, explosive ordnance risk education, reporting, victim assistance);
- Raise awareness of opportunities and promote cooperation between the different actors in the region to address the challenges faced.

Among the topics to be covered are the:

- status of the implementation of the Convention,
- importance of humanitarian principles in addressing the threat,
- impact and efforts by States Parties to address improvised anti-personnel mines,
- roles and capacities of National Mine Action Centres,
- data collection and reporting under the Convention’s framework,
- risk education and reduction,
- victim assistance,
- national implementation measures under the Convention,
- regional frameworks, partnership and collaboration, and,
- obligations under the Convention.

Guidance for participating and requesting sponsorship

- **Who is invited to participate?** Representatives from States Parties to the Convention in West Africa and the Sahel Region.

- **Who should states nominate to participate?**
 - Leading focal person who routinely engages with matters related to disarmament, small weapons, emergency response, or small arms and light weapons commission,
 - a key person from a mine action structure; and,
 - in the case of non-affected states, a person whose work relates to the implementation of the Convention.

The nominee should be able to contribute to expert discussions and panels and follow up on conference outcomes.

- **Which organisations are being invited?** Leading UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organisations including of experts working in mine action and with an understanding of the threat posed by improvised anti-personnel mines.

- **Who is eligible for sponsorship?** States affected by anti-personnel mines including of an improvised nature or other explosive ordnance that would otherwise not be able to participate may submit one nomination. A few non-governmental organisations will be invited to nominate one sponsored participant. A handful of presenters may be sponsored to participate.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>What does the sponsorship include?</u> Upon successful vetting, sponsored delegates will travel on the most direct route in an economy class ticket, receive a modest per diem for meals not covered during the conference, and be provided with accommodation at the same hotel where the meeting will take place. Neither additional compensation nor arrangements such as upgrade travel or lodging in different quarters can be arranged under the sponsorship. The delegate must accept the conditions of the sponsorship prior to beginning travel arrangements. Teams from the ISU and Ghana’s Small Arms and Light Weapons Commission will liaise with the delegates and provide support prior to, during, and upon departing the conference. By accepting the sponsorship, delegates agree <u>to attend the entirety of the conference</u> and actively participate including by contributing to panels upon invitation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>How many persons can register per delegation?</u> Unless otherwise noted and due to constraints in space and associated costs, a maximum of two persons can attend per delegation. Sponsorship is subject to approval.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Will there be interpretation?</u> At the time of this invitation, the ISU is endeavouring to ensure interpretation to/from Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>How to register?</u> Registration will be a two-step process. First, a Note Verbale listing the name(s) of the official representative(s), title or official status, and email address(es) should be sent to the ISU. A link will then be provided to the delegates to register online. The online registration will begin the second week of January 2024.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>When/where should Notes Verbales be sent?</u> From receipt of this letter and until 15 January if it includes request for sponsorship or until 25 January if no sponsorship is requested. Notes Verbales should be sent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ isu(at)apminebanconvention.org as follows, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit c/o EU project team

We encourage your State / organisation to act promptly to identify and nominate participants. A draft programme and further logistical information will soon be published on the Convention’s website.

<https://www.apminebanconvention.org/en/resources/eu-project/art5-west-africa-sahel-workshop/>

Should you have any question or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact the ISU at [isu\(at\)apminebanconvention.org](mailto:isu(at)apminebanconvention.org).