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**Opening remarks by Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director of the GICHD  
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Intersessional meetings  
Geneva, 19-21 June 2023**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to deliver these opening remarks today. I would like to express my gratitude to the Presidency, the Implementation Support Unit and my colleagues at the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining for their tireless work in organising these intersessional meetings.

The APMBC, with its concrete and positive impact on the lives of millions of individuals around the world, is undoubtedly a success story. Yet, we live in a period of instability, with armed conflicts erupting or persisting in many parts of the world, while other States still struggle to be free of long-standing contamination. The result is a heightened risk from explosive devices, which cause immense damage to people and communities worldwide. We must therefore redouble our efforts to uphold the norms set by the Convention and to ensure that they are not eroded. Accelerating progress towards the universalization of the Convention and strengthening our commitment towards its full implementation remain fundamental.

The Oslo Action Plan gave us an ambitious but realistic and measurable roadmap to guide our efforts for a more robust implementation of the Convention and to strengthen the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of our work. As we approach the 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the APMBC, we must start to identify areas of OAP implementation that might need strengthening as well as others that may not have been adequately prioritised. In this regard, let me reiterate the importance of the timely sharing of information by the States Parties on progress in turning the OAP commitments into reality.

Mr President,

The GICHD greatly welcomes that the intersessionals will consider some of the key aspects of implementation of the Convention that still require dedicated efforts towards their full implementation.

Mine action benefits from the effective mainstreaming of gender and diversity. We now need to focus on equality and inclusion results by leveraging increased commitments and targeted resources. The GICHD is actively engaged on this. The Centre works alongside partners in affected countries to reinforce capacities by providing assessments, skills-based training, inclusive leadership training, support in joint work plans, ongoing technical assistance, and monitoring visits. We strongly encourage States Parties and other partners to take advantage of the resources and support available.

Discussing matters related to timely planning towards completion is important as well. Early planning allows for identifying and putting in place the necessary structures and processes, both operational and legal, that will address any residual contamination safely, sustainably, effectively and efficiently. Through workshops and direct support in strategic planning, standards, and tailored information management solutions, the GICHD is currently assisting States interested in better understanding how to prepare for completion.

Lastly, it is greatly appreciated that these meetings will address how better to integrate environmental considerations into implementation efforts, a topic which has not yet received sufficient attention from our community. Through several publications, the GICHD has been exploring both the unintended negative consequences of mine action operations on the environment, such as degradation caused by some clearance methods, and the transformative potential of interventions in protecting it, in the broad framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Currently the Centre is analysing the trends and good practice concerning mine action's contribution to climate change resilience. We will report on results of this analysis later in the year.

Mr. President,

The mine action sector has had considerable success. In addition to the 30 States Parties having declared completion under Article 5, some others are no longer far from implementing the Convention's time-bound obligations. New success stories in mine action can indeed be achieved if the sector continues to provide targeted and impactful support to the affected

States Parties, whose emergency situation, if I may say so, no longer makes headlines. We must also revive the momentum around those States that, despite their considerable efforts and progress, are a just few steps away from completion and still need a final push to meet their obligations as soon as possible.

I wish us all a productive meeting that will help us adequately prepare for the Twenty-First Meeting of the State Parties and the upcoming Review Conference in 2024.