



European Union
Intersessional Meeting
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 19-21 June 2023

Statement on Mine Clearance (Article 5)

Mr. Chair,

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

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ align themselves with this statement.

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 remains committed to supporting mine clearance activities to help mine-affected States Parties meet their Article 5 obligations under the Convention. Large scale contamination of land threatens local communities, returning civilian populations and first responders, and hinders the use and rebuilding of crucial civilian infrastructure. It also hampers the return of economic activity, notably in the transport, trade, and agricultural sectors. Mine action is therefore critical to the humanitarian emergency response, to the peace and security agenda and sustainable development, and positively contributes to stabilisation and sustaining peace.

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 assistance provided by the EU in 2022 amounted up to 90 million EUR, contributing to 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.

An additional programme of up to 25 million EUR to support Ukraine's demining of the liberated territories temporarily occupied by Russian armed forces was recently announced by

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

the EU. 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.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms that Russia is using anti-personnel landmines in its war of aggression against Ukraine. Anti-personnel landmines pose a long-lasting threat to civilians and hinder humanitarian access. Russia must stop using anti-personnel mines immediately. Their use anywhere, anytime, and by any actor remains completely unacceptable to the European Union.

Russia bears full responsibility for the loss of life, the human suffering and all the destruction it causes in Ukraine. The EU fully acknowledges Ukraine's right to self-defence and the Ukrainian armed forces' efforts to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and population in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. We commend the Ukrainian people's strength, courage and resistance to withstand Russia's aggression and stand with them in firm solidarity. The EU will continue its programmes to support Ukraine in mine clearance as well as in victim assistance and rehabilitation. A corresponding programme for Ukraine needs to be urgently developed due to the Russian aggression and use of landmines by the Russian armed forces.

Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine is not only a blatant violation of international law, including 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 human rights law. The EU actively supports the work of the International Criminal Court and measures to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes of international concern. There can be no impunity for these crimes.

Mr. Chair,

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.

The EU wishes to recall that some improvised explosive devices fit the definition of an anti-personnel mine as they are "a mine designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons" and therefore should be considered and reported as anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature.

The EU considers it important to continue raising awareness of the obligation of States Parties to address this type of contamination within the framework of the Convention and to report the use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature.

Mr. Chair,

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. 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 on Article 5 Implementation to continue strengthening the Article 5 extension request process and adherence to the relevant actions of the Oslo Action Plan, including by drawing on input from all relevant stakeholders. We look forward to the report of the Article 5 Committee in this regard.

The EU considers low reporting rates as an issue of concern that must be improved. The actions regarding reporting, as foreseen in the Convention, and decided by the States Parties during Review Conferences, as well as on a voluntary basis, as encouraged during Meetings of States Parties, require more focused attention. The EU calls for increased reporting rates as well as for an innovative, coordinated approach and a comprehensive program aiming at advocating, assisting and promoting the reporting under the mandate of the President.

We realize that there is a clear need for strengthened cooperation, assistance and mobilization of resources towards achieving the goal of a mine free world. The lack of financial resources is the main challenge, and the EU calls upon all actors, public or private, to collectively explore options possible for new and alternative sources of funding.

Thank you, Mr. Chair