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Statement by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

“Cooperation and Assistance: Conclusions and recommendations related to the mandate of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance”

APMBC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19-21 June 2023

Mr. President,

It is important that the States Parties assume primary responsibility for implementing their obligations under the Convention. It is also essential that they can – if they so request – continue to count on the support of our community in their efforts. Cooperation and assistance serve as an effective means for affected States in this regard, and actions #42 to #47 of the Oslo Action Plan provide a solid framework and a clear roadmap that can lead towards effective and timely fulfilment of obligations of affected States.

For international cooperation and assistance to be effective and efficient, it is essential that all actors on the ground have a solid understanding of the specific challenges and priorities of an affected country and its population. The individualised approach under the Convention is a very welcome undertaking in this respect. Bringing together national authorities, operators and other stakeholders, the individualised approach offers a space for dialogue and better coordination under the lead of the affected country. As such, it is an ideal platform to clarify outstanding needs and challenges to completion, facilitate the exchange of information on actors involved and the support they provide, and promote coherent and coordinated efforts for timely completion.

While continuing to welcome initiatives under the individualized approach, we are also mindful that these should serve as a catalyst for strengthened national ownership, planning and implementation at the national level. To this end, we must all do more to support the development of local capacities, through an inclusive approach that mainstreams gender, diversity and promotes equality and inclusion, to ensure that affected States are endowed with all necessary human, institutional, technical and financial resources.

It is highly encouraging to see that the gender focal point of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance has led the development of an action plan on gender and diversity. The plan sets out several clear actions the Committee will take to ensure gender and diversity are mainstreamed. It is the first of its kind implemented under the Convention.

We must also provide opportunities for States to share lessons, good practices, challenges and solutions, particularly at the regional level. We are convinced that such exchanges of knowledge and experience among States facing similar realities are greatly beneficial towards effective and efficient mine action. For this reason, the GICHD has established three Regional Cooperation Programmes targeting Arab-speaking and French-speaking regions as well as Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. These platforms also contribute to strengthening technical knowledge, including through the translation of mine action tools and standards into local languages and their dissemination.

In December 2022, through its Francophone Regional Cooperation Programme, the GICHD organised a workshop at the Centre for post-conflict demining and clearance in Ouidah, Benin, bringing together twenty-four participants from national authorities, mine action programmes, national arms control commissions and operators active in the region. The workshop aimed to continue promoting regional cooperation and foster the enhancement of humanitarian response capacities to the problem of explosive ordnance contamination, including by IEDs. The Centre was delighted to partner with the CPADD for this initiative, given its recognized expertise and critical role in offering training programmes for explosive ordnance risk reduction actors.

Mr. President,

Cooperation and Assistance can play a key role for those States Parties that are close to completion but need one last push to finish their work. The mine action sector rightly invests time and resources in supporting countries and territories where contamination levels are significant, or where there is a humanitarian imperative to mitigate the impacts of explosive ordnance. This engagement is undoubtedly necessary. Nonetheless, we must continue to support countries that could reach completion in the shorter term and whose progress is sometimes held back because, if I may say so, their situation no longer makes headlines. We must ensure that funding provided in emergency contexts is not mobilised at the expense of supporting other affected States in need of support.

Thank you.