

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Fifth Review Conference (5RC) of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on Their Destruction

25 - 29 November 2024 | Siem Reap, Cambodia

Renewing the Political Commitment to the Convention **High-Level segment**

STATEMENT

*to be delivered by Assistant Secretary Maria Terasa T. Almojuela
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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The Philippines' journey towards mine action began here in Cambodia. In 1995, following the visit of then-President Fidel Ramos, we took the decisive step of destroying our entire stockpile of landmines as a testament to our dedication to this cause.

Today, the Philippines reaffirms our commitment to this landmark accord. This resolve is rooted in our national principles: the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy and the value we place on the dignity of every human person. These principles are the bedrock of our staunch adherence to international humanitarian law.

We take pride in having ratified nearly all major humanitarian disarmament treaties. We have also endorsed recent key initiatives, such as the Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

As we assess this Convention's implementation, we must acknowledge the vast scope of the work that lies ahead. The UN Secretary General's report on mine action highlights how explosive ordnance contamination, including landmines, continues to endanger civilians and limit access to essential services and

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humanitarian aid. Contamination also hampers infrastructure rehabilitation severely impacting development.

This calls for a renewed focus on the human cost of contamination and the integration of mine action into broader sustainable development efforts.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2022, 73 percent of casualties caused by explosive ordnance, including landmines, were civilians. To meaningfully address this, the Philippines supports strengthening a human rights-based approach to victim assistance. This includes cross-border assistance ensuring that migrant workers, refugees, and other mobile populations can access essential services.

We firmly believe that integrating mine action into peace agreements – including mine clearance, risk education, and victim assistance – is vital for creating safer conditions that enable displaced communities to return and rebuild lives. We have seen this in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro which contains a provision addressing landmines and unexploded ordinances.

The Philippines further supports the inclusion of indigenous peoples in mine action efforts. Indigenous communities, often living in biodiversity-rich areas affected by conflict, bring valuable local knowledge. Prioritizing mine action in these areas protects ecosystems and the cultural integrity in indigenous lands.

Women and girls remain disproportionately affected by armed conflict and mine contamination. For its part, the Philippines recently hosted the International Conference on Women, Peace, and Security. The WPS agenda aims for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction, including mine action.

This Conference must also acknowledge how climate change create new challenges for mine action. The evolving climate exacerbates risks and complicates operations. Addressing these challenges demands adaptive strategies and enhanced international cooperation.

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The Philippines continues to face challenges, particularly the use of improvised landmines by non-state armed groups, such as the New People's Army. From 2010 to 2021, we have recorded 254 cases of their anti-personnel mine use. Our Commission on Human Rights (CHR), in collaboration with the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines, is addressing these cases while exploring broader issues related to explosive weapons.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The success of this Convention depends on inclusivity, cooperation, and shared responsibility. In this spirit, the Philippines manifests our strong support to the Siem Reap-Angkor Declaration on a Mine-Free World. We pledge to work alongside all States Parties to achieve a future free from landmines, ensuring that our partnerships are strengthened and our actions reflect the urgency of this cause.

Allow me at this juncture to commend the Kingdom of Cambodia for its outstanding leadership of this Review Conference.

While this Convention was finalized in Oslo and opened for signature in Ottawa, we believe that the spirit of mine action truly began here in Cambodia. This initiative has now, in every sense, come home.

Thank you.