

**Speech by ICRC Vice-President Gilles Carbonnier
Fifth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Siem Reap-Angkor, 25 November 2024**

Your Excellency Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I am delighted to address the Fifth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Cambodia is one of the cradles of the global movement for a mine-free world, and I wish to thank our host for welcoming us to this unique World Heritage setting in Siem Reap.

Let me start by recalling the humanitarian rationale underpinning the Convention. When it was adopted in 1997, the overwhelming majority of landmine victims were civilians – often displaced people returning to their homes, trying to rebuild their lives, or farmers seeking to live off their land. A high number of victims were children whose young lives were abruptly cut short, or forever altered after stepping on a mine, be it on their way to school or while playing outdoors.

Despite significant progress since 1997, far too many of those tragic consequences continue to hit civilians, who keep bearing the brunt of the suffering. The humanitarian imperative to put an end to such indiscriminate weapons and to support mine victims remains as pressing now, as it was when the Convention was adopted.

It is unacceptable that our common ambition to achieve a mine-free world by 2025 is not within reach. The slow pace of mine clearance and repeated delays are a matter of grave concern. So too are allegations of violations of the Convention and significant shortfalls in the provision of assistance to mine victims, not to mention the slowing rate of universalization.

We nonetheless have many reasons to be proud. Over three-quarters of UN Member States are bound by the Convention. Since 1997, millions of stockpiled mines have been destroyed by States Parties. Vast areas of land have been cleared and returned to safe uses.

These significant achievements make me hopeful that, together, we can find solutions to long-standing and new challenges. We are encouraged by the increased attention to critical issues such as improvised anti-personnel mines, the socio-economic inclusion of mine survivors, mine risk education, environmental concerns and the potential of fast technological advances for demining.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We must be steadfast in ensuring the universalization and effective implementation of the Convention, and outspoken in defence of its humanitarian norms.

- This means, first, speaking out against the use of anti-personnel mines by any actor anywhere, irrespective of the circumstances. There can be no justification for a weapon,

which causes such indiscriminate and long-lasting effects, as Cambodians have experienced.

- Second, this means working tirelessly toward the universalization of the Convention.
- And thirdly, this means addressing allegations of violations of the Convention promptly while also preventing breaches.

You can count on us, the ICRC, to do our part by engaging with States Parties and other partners to further the Convention's goals.

In this context, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Cambodia and His Excellency, Prime Minister Hun Manet, for recognizing the role of my organization in the development and implementation of the Convention.

The trophy we have just received is a testament to the tireless dedication of all the components of our International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. I would like to commend here the Cambodian Red Cross in particular, for its longstanding efforts to address the devastating humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines. I am also glad to report that five other National Societies are participating in this conference.

This trophy is a reminder of what we can achieve working together to prevent and alleviate the suffering of mine victims.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We urge you to set ambitious goals for the next five years and strive to act with the urgency required to address the pressing challenges facing mine-affected communities today, and to make our shared vision of a mine-free world a reality.

I wish you a fruitful conference.