

**NPA Statement on**  
**Agenda Item 6. Renewing the political commitment of the convention**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**  
**Siem Reap, 29 November 2024**

**Delivered by Aksel Steen-Nilsen, Head of Department, Mine Action and Disarmament**

Thank you, Mr. President,

The APMBC is one of the strongest and most successful humanitarian disarmament treaties, and its success lies in its ability to gather a great number of states, operators and the civil society to work together towards the commitments made to implement the Treaty provisions. The Treaty established a strong global norm against anti-personnel mines; by stigmatizing and delegitimizing these weapons, and it obliges States Parties to comply with all its provisions, without exception. It is thus imperative that States Parties remain committed to *all* legal obligations they signed onto, *all* provisions, and *all* articles. At *all* times. Currently the integrity of the treaty norm is under threat as never before in its history.

It is certainly easier to adhere to the Treaty in peacetime, but this legal instrument was also designed to regulate the actions of States in times of armed conflict. The overriding aim is to ensure that civilians (and also combatants) do not suffer from weapons that cause unnecessary and indiscriminate harm, meaning that its true test arises during conflict. The stigma and norm against using anti-personnel mines as a weapon of choice is so strong that no actor should ever under any circumstances use these weapons, and for States Parties the provisions of the Convention are unequivocally binding under international law.

These legal obligations are clear and categorical and cannot allow for exceptions or tolerances, as that creates a dangerous precedent that there can be an acceptable exception to the rule. If this were to happen, the most fundamental norm of the Convention and its very object and purpose would be weakened irreparably.

Mr. President, the very first article of this Convention, Article 1.a) unequivocally states that “Each State Party undertakes never under any circumstances to use anti-personnel mines.” While anti-personnel mines should never be used by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, for States Parties, Article 1 is legally binding, and States Parties have to hold each other to account when there is evidence of use by a fellow State Party.

NPA strongly condemns the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, and we stand in full solidarity with the people of Ukraine, remaining firm in our resolve to protect civilians from these indiscriminate weapons. We further condemn the use of anti-personnel mines by Russia. The devastating amount of anti-personnel mine contamination in Ukraine is a grave humanitarian concern. NPA will continue to support Ukraine to rid itself of these indiscriminate weapons through our clearance operations and work in country. But not even Russia’s aggression should allow Ukraine to use anti-personnel mines.

NPA is gravely concerned by the lack of clear, robust response from the States Parties to the use of anti-personnel mines by State Party Ukraine. This threatens to weaken the international norm against the use of anti-personnel mines and undermines this Treaty. We welcome clear and strong statements made by several States Parties addressing this during the week, and their commitment to preserve this crucial Treaty.

The Convention's long-lasting success must be guarded to continue its purpose for future generations; compliance with its norms being ensured at all times and under all circumstances.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, the APMBC saves lives not only in conflict but for decades after a conflict is over. We have to uphold what we worked so hard to have. There are certain types of weapons which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, AP mines are one of those weapons, there is no argument with that. You all, as States Parties, have a responsibility that transcends place and time, and that is to protect the existing humanitarian disarmament frameworks and ensure civilians are protected at all times and under all circumstances.

Thank you.