

**Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

Fifth Review Conference, Siem Reap, 25-29 November 2024

Universalisation

Statement by Austria

Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to warmly congratulate you for presiding over this Summit and assure you of my delegation's full support. Austria commends Cambodia for its extraordinary hospitality and its exemplary leadership on mine action as well as for steering us skilfully towards a successful outcome of this Review Conference. We also thank the ISU for its invaluable support.

Austria is fully aligned with the statements on behalf of the European Union.

The Mine Ban Convention is one of the most universal disarmament treaties and its norms against anti-personnel mines have demonstrated strong effect far beyond the States Parties. Since the last Review Conference, however, we have seen no further accessions and we therefore fully support the focus that the Presidency has put on universalization. Austria wishes to express its appreciation to the Special Envoys H.R.H. Prince Mired and H.R.H. Princess Astrid for their unwavering support and high-level engagement, to States Parties, the UN, ICRC and civil society for the collective efforts. We also commend the actions of the EU in support of universalization efforts.

Several states outside the Convention have put moratoria on the production, use and transfer of anti-personnel mines and we welcome all intermediary steps that can be taken towards full accession, which is the essential objective to translate the often tacit respect for the norms into legally binding obligations. At the same time, anti-personnel mines continue to kill and maim civilians throughout the world and we deplore the recent increase in use and are alarmed by the resulting number of

causalities. The increased use by armed non-state actors adds further to this concern. We commend the efforts of states, the ICRC and civil society to engage with such groups to end their use of anti-personnel mines, provide mine risk education and victim assistance.

Mr. President,

This Review Conference is taking place at times of heightened geopolitical tensions coupled with arms races and ongoing armed conflicts in several regions in the world. The most vulnerable – women, children, persons with disabilities and minorities – bear the brunt of war and of the decisions that parties of armed conflict make on the means of warfare they use.

Anti-personnel mines are never a legitimate means of warfare, as they could never be used in compliance with IHL and international human rights law. They are prohibited because of their indiscriminate nature and their unacceptable humanitarian and socio-economic consequence. By the time the Treaty was adopted, it had also become clear that no exceptions were acceptable as to any particular characteristics such as so-called “smart” anti-personnel mines. A comprehensive ban of these inhuman weapons was the only acceptable outcome.

Austria reiterates the absolute prohibition of anti-personnel mines and condemns any use of anti-personnel mines by any actor under any circumstances. We are shocked by the widespread and continuous use of anti-personnel mines by Russia in its unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. Austria fully stands with Ukraine in its self-defence and has always been supporting Ukraine in the framework of this Treaty, including by providing assistance for mine action. We appreciate Ukraine’s commitment to fully investigate and clarify allegations of anti-personnel mine use. While we commend Ukraine for having adhered to its international legal commitments even in the most extreme situations, we are very concerned by reports about the transfer of anti-personnel mines to Ukrainian territory. We urge Ukraine to fully adhere to its obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty and in any calculation about receiving or even considering use of anti-personnel mines to take into account its obligations under the Convention and the devastating consequences of such a step for the civilian population for decades to come. We urge Ukraine to also consider the wider repercussions this would have

for the Mine Ban Treaty and all it stands for – rule of law, human dignity , for international humanitarian law and human rights.

We urge the US to reverse its decision to transfer anti-personnel mines to Ukraine and to maintain the longstanding US policy of non-use and non-transfer respecting the prohibition norms of the Mine Ban Treaty.

Thank you.