

Thank you, Mr. President, I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of the 13 member organizations of the Gender and Diversity in Mine Action Working Group.

We welcome the working paper and joint statement led by the Gender Focal Points which outlines the successes of the past five years and identifies opportunities to enhance our collective implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty in an inclusive manner. We are disappointed that despite many calls from civil society and states parties, there is no specific agenda item on gender and diversity which would help put these discussions in the spotlight.

The Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan provides a clear roadmap for all stakeholders with regards to gender and diversity sensitive implementation. We encourage all states to actively support these efforts and recognize that international cooperation and assistance are critical to amplifying this work. Cooperation is not only essential for ensuring that States fulfill their treaty obligations but also for embedding inclusivity as a cross-cutting theme in mine action.

During the 4th Review Conference five years ago, states put a new emphasis on being sensitive to gender and diversity in our shared work. From then onwards our driving purpose as a working group was and continues to be, to guarantee that gender and diversity are addressed within the framework of this convention and in the implementation of all five pillars of mine action in affected countries. While we have made significant progress in terms of representation, documenting impact in a gender and diversity responsive manner as well as mainstreaming requirements at donor level – we can do more to ensure meaningful participation of women, survivors and people with disabilities. Today, we see how the importance of gender and diversity is being questioned by some, and this undermines our collective work.

As various donor countries are experiencing budget cuts – this cannot come at the expense of gender and diversity mainstreaming, which is very often inexpensive. We reiterate, these efforts are essential and they ensure that mine action activities are effective.

Moreover, new areas are being contaminated, and new victims are appearing because of recent conflicts which adds to the urgency of complying with our obligations.

Over the last five years, we have faced many obstacles – unfortunately as with other disarmament norms – the climate to support gender and diversity on the international stage has grown increasingly hostile. We are grateful for the relentless efforts of many States' Parties and national authorities that have prioritized gender and diversity in this environment.

Next year we are celebrating 25 years of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda – we welcome the references to WPS throughout the action plan, which recognizes the long-standing contribution of the sector to the WPS Agenda. Whilst progress has been made in representation of women in the sector, there is still a long way to go both in terms of employment of women and inclusion of women and girls in community and global consultations. Integrating mine action into WPS National Action Plans can help strengthen and coordinate these efforts at the national level.

Mr. President, as Gender and Diversity Working Group, we also remain concerned about the inequities in the current mine action funding environment; affected states are too rarely part of the conversation on funding priorities.

There have been changes proposed in terms of the convention machinery to increase transparency and coordination on funding, including via better inclusion and South-South cooperation – but we still have a long way to go.

Mr. President, the member organizations of the Gender and Diversity Working Group remain unwavering in our commitment to supporting States parties in achieving these objectives.

The only way forward is together, keeping our shared goals and values at the forefront. These remain as critical as ever. We must continue working to uphold them and to ensure that no one is left behind on our path towards a mine free world.

Thank you