



Ninth Annual Pledging Conference
Support to the Implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 1 March 2024
EU Statement

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova¹ align themselves with this statement.

First, allow me to commend Cambodia's Presidency for guiding our collective efforts and hosting the 5th Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Siem Reap later this year. Please, be assured that you can count on the EU resolute support in strengthening the Convention and adopting a new Action Plan. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of anti-personnel landmines. Anti-personnel landmines pose a long-lasting threat to civilians and hinder humanitarian access. Their use anywhere, anytime, and by any actor remains completely unacceptable to the European Union and we are resolved to continue our intense efforts in achieving a mine-free world including through financial assistance.

The EU welcomes the Ninth Pledging Conference and continues to strongly encourage all States and donors to support the effective implementation of the Convention in all its aspects through the sustainable financing of humanitarian mine action, as well as all efforts leading to its universalisation.

The European Union maintains its strong engagement in funding and supporting mine action worldwide and will continue to do so in the future. The EU remains the world's second largest

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

donor in mine action, having contributed over 800 million EUR to humanitarian mine action over the past six years. EU funding to mine action amounted to 26 million EUR in 2023 only, with another 57 million EUR from ongoing allocations dating from the previous years.

The list of countries having received EU funding for mine action activities is very long, across all continents and regions of the world. Armenia, Azerbaijan (risk education, victim assistance and mine clearance), Colombia (mine clearance and rehabilitation of former combatants), Libya, Somalia, Northeast Syria, Ukraine and Yemen are only a few to be mentioned. We sincerely hope that our collective European commitment for mine action in States not Party will bring these States closer to the Convention.

Regarding Ukraine, which is now the most mine-contaminated country in the world with over 30% of its territory at risk of landmines or other explosive ordnance, the second Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment estimated the cost for clearance of explosive ordnance at around 5.6 billion USD in the short-term as of February 2023.

The sheer size of Ukraine requires an efficient mine action strategy, decisive action and continued international support to help Ukraine in tackling this challenge. The overall priority is clear: to ensure protection of civilians and safely return as much land back to civilian use as fast as possible. This is a crucial pre-condition for the return of economic activity and for people to return to their homes and communities. Mine action also remains key to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

The EU will continue to stand by the Ukrainian people to make their land safe again. We are fully committed to help support mine action governance reform for more effective assessment and demining, and are looking into making further resources available in line with Ukraine's national strategy for mine action currently being developed.

Together with its Member States, the EU is providing more than 110 million EUR to support humanitarian demining in Ukraine. This includes more than 50 million EUR of ongoing support financed through EU rapid response and humanitarian assistance, including mine risk education, non-technical surveys, the acquisition of special demining equipment and support to Ukraine's national capacities in demining and mine action governance. Moreover, a further crisis response action of 10 million EUR was adopted in December 2023 and includes support to innovative technologies in mine action operations, as well as innovative funding approaches, for instance via partnerships with the European Financial Institutions.

To achieve the objective of a world free of mines, the European Union emphasizes the need to help all countries, whether heavily affected or not, by mine contamination. Indeed, some countries, such as Cambodia, have been suffering from mine contamination for a long time.

Under Council Decision 2021/257 adopted in February 2021, 2.6 million EUR have been allocated to the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan to promote the universalisation of the Convention and help States Parties to meet their obligations, in particular to implement non-technical surveys, mine clearance and mine risk education, as well as to develop policies to best assist mine victims in a non-discriminatory manner addressing the specific needs of all civilians, including mental health and psychosocial support. These activities will continue until February 2025, when we will then start implementing a new Action Plan. The EU is committed to mainstreaming a gender perspective into its mine action work and we continue to support the work of stakeholders in mine action to advance gender equality and take into account the diverse needs and experience of people in affected communities into their humanitarian mine action policies. In this regard, we acknowledge a gender work plan 2023 developed by the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance together with the Gender Focal Point (ref. APLC/MSP.21/2023/9).

The Implementation Support Unit also receives EU support under this decision and I would like to seize this opportunity to commend the engagement and hard work of the small ISU team, and its exemplary implementation of the EU project. The EU aims to continue supporting the work of the ISU in the future and encourages all partners and States Parties to continue to do so as well.

Mr. President,

Today's Conference provides us with an opportunity to renew our collective commitment to the comprehensive prohibition of anti-personnel mines, towards the goal of a mine-free world, and to enhance cooperation and assistance for mine action. The 21st Meeting of State Parties held in November demonstrated the progress made by mine-affected countries to fulfil their demining obligations, to identify remaining and emerging challenges, and to assist victims. This momentum must be maintained.

In conclusion, we would like to take this opportunity to once again encourage all States Parties to contribute to mine action, including to the work of the Implementation Support Unit, which is critical to the functioning of the Convention.

I thank you.