



ICRC



ICRC-IFRC Joint Statement on Universalization

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention 22nd Meeting of States Parties,

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Agenda Item 9.f. – Universalizing the Convention

This statement is delivered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), which is composed of 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It is being delivered by representatives from the Swedish Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross

Madam President,

As the world's largest humanitarian network, our staff and volunteers know too well the devastating impact of anti-personnel mines. These weapons kill and injure mostly civilians, too often children, and render entire communities unsafe. Homes, fields, and roads are contaminated, destroying livelihoods and hindering recovery, and making it more difficult for people to return home after a conflict ends. They also make the response of our staff and volunteers to affected populations difficult and dangerous.

For nearly three decades the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has saved countless lives, prevented untold suffering and transformed global norms. Thanks to the commitment of its current 166 States Parties, we have seen the destruction of more than 55 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines around the world. According to the Landmine Monitor Report, last year alone, States Parties reported releasing more than 1100 Square Kilometres of contaminated land. Every mine removed is a life saved and a livelihood secured. Most importantly, these efforts have established an important norm against use of these weapons, sending a clear message that anti-personnel mines have no place in today's world.

The universality of this norm has been further strengthened this year as we welcome the Marshall Islands and Tonga to the Convention, which demonstrate significant commitment from states across many regions. But this momentum cannot stop here. The promise of a world free from anti-personnel mines can only be fulfilled through universal ratification and adherence. We continue to call on the remaining States not party to join this treaty without delay. In line with Actions 11 and 12 of the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan we urge all States Parties, the Presidency and the Universalization Coordination Group, to promote these norms through global and regional advocacy, bilateral dialogue with non-States Parties, and by condemning any use and transfer of anti-personnel mines by any actor under any circumstances.

Madam President,

Through the operationalization of this landmark treaty, we have progressively moved away from an era of these inhumane weapons. Why would we ever wish to turn back?

States must preserve and protect existing treaties and the norms they embody. The very last thing that States should do in times of insecurity and conflict is to abandon disarmament treaties. We are dismayed that six states have announced their intention to withdraw from or purportedly “suspend” the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Not only is this a step backward that risks eroding life-saving protections and threatens decades of global efforts to eradicate these inhumane weapons, but it also undermines IHL and the entire multilateral disarmament enterprise. There is no reason that can justify abandoning this treaty. Legal commitments are not conditional, and human beings should not be expendable.

Madam President

The positive impacts of humanitarian demining can only be appreciated if no new mines are laid. Any weakening of this treaty will almost certainly result in more civilian casualties. The humanitarian, legal and moral reasons underlying this Convention have not changed. Nor has the obligation on every State Party to uphold and promote it.

International Humanitarian Law exists for the darkest days of armed conflict. It is precisely when faced with conflict that IHL, including this Treaty, is needed the most.

We urge all States Parties to this Convention to uphold their obligations; urge States who have submitted their instruments of withdrawal to reconsider; and urge all States that are not yet party to the Convention to join without delay. Let us work together to expand the Convention’s reach, reinforce its impact, and achieve a mine free world where civilians are delivered from the threats posed by these unacceptable weapons.