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Opening remarks by Ambassador Tobias Privitelli  
GICHD Director

Intersessional Meeting of the APMBC, Geneva, 17 June 2025

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues,

It is an honour to address you at the opening of this Intersessional meeting of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty. I sincerely thank you for being here and for demonstrating your commitment, especially at a time of unprecedented political and financial pressure on this Convention.

Let me also thank Ambassador Ichikawa for her remarkable stewardship of our work so far, and the ISU for their dedicated support to full APMBC implementation.

Since its adoption, the APMBC has seen remarkable strides in its core obligations: 164 States Parties have destroyed more than 53 million stocked mines; thirty States Parties have completed clearance; countless lives have been saved, survivors supported, communities restored. This work has been central to promoting and solidifying the global norm against the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines.

Yet, today, the progress achieved through decades of collective effort is at risk. Confirmed or announced withdrawals from the Convention and declining financial support by several donors threaten to significantly slow down continued progress, if not reverse these achievements.

The human cost of using landmines remains too high. Landmines continue to kill and maim civilians - nearly half of whom are children and women. They hinder post-conflict recovery and sustainable development. Current debates on withdrawing from the Convention, therefore, put lives at risk. They also set a dangerous precedent, weakening the broader system of agreed rules that States developed over decades to ensure the protection of civilians during and after armed conflict. Against this concerning backdrop, funding cuts directly affect the sector's ability to address growing needs.

Madam President, excellencies, colleagues,

As we confront the challenges ahead, we must strengthen our efforts to implement the APMBC, exploring ways to be more efficient and effective in a context of growing needs, diminishing resources, and competing priorities both domestically and on the international agenda.

The Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan provides a solid foundation for these efforts. Allow me to highlight a few points in this regard.

- First, the SRAAP further emphasizes the role of mine action as part of global efforts to protect civilians, and towards peace and development. It commits States Parties to implement APMBC provisions as part of national development strategies – linking them to poverty reduction, human rights, health, inclusion, gender equality, environmental protection and peacebuilding.
- Second, the Plan calls for strengthened localization efforts to support sustainable interventions, including post completion. It also calls on States to channel international assistance through contributions to local organizations, as appropriate.
- Third, the Action Plan maintains that inclusion is critical to effective and sustainable outcomes. This entails considering age, disability, and the distinct experiences of women, men, girls and boys in all aspects of APMBC implementation.
- Finally, the Action Plan reaffirms that all Convention obligations matter equally. Too often, the focus has been on time bound obligations, especially clearance. The SRAAP underscores the central role of victim assistance and mine risk education, especially in contexts where clearance is delayed or residual contamination remains.

All these points are closely aligned with the very essence of the GICHD. Since its inception, the Centre has supported national authorities in establishing the systems, knowledge, and skills required to address contamination from landmines and other explosive ordnance.

These efforts contribute directly to the sustainable, inclusive, and locally driven approaches the Action Plan calls for.

We will share further details of our work in the course of this week's meetings.

The APMBC has saved lives, returned land to productive use, and helped communities rebuild. Its relevance remains undiminished. Let us keep this in mind as we begin our deliberations.

I wish you all a productive and engaging week.