

Intersessional Meeting of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Statement by ESTONIA

20 June 2025, Geneva

Madam President, Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on assuming the Presidency of the Twenty-Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I would like to express my delegation's appreciation for the opportunity to address this meeting.

Honourable Delegates,

Estonia acceded to the Ottawa Convention in 2004, more than 20 years ago. Since that time, the security environment in Europe and the Baltic Sea region has significantly deteriorated, and military threats to our national security have markedly increased.

This deterioration has been driven solely by the Russian Federation's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, which has fundamentally destabilized the European security order and poses an existential threat to neighbouring states, including Estonia. By employing military force to pursue its imperialist objectives, Russia is acting in flagrant violation of international law, including the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and the universally recognised norms of international humanitarian law.

The Russian Federation is not a State Party to the Ottawa Convention and continues to employ anti-personnel landmines extensively in its war against Ukraine, with over 170,000 square kilometres of Ukrainian territory contaminated. The lessons of this war show that if the anti-personnel mine ban applies to only one party of the conflict, it may not necessarily spare this country from being contaminated with landmines by the enemy, but it may deprive the defending side of the possibility to restrict the invasion and movement of hostile forces through the employment of mines.

Given the unstable security environment in our region, it is essential to consider all appropriate means that could enhance Estonia's deterrence and defence capabilities, and to retain the broadest possible flexibility of action for our armed forces.

In light of the above, Estonia has taken the decision to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention, pursuant to its paragraph 2 of Article 20. This decision has been taken under exceptional circumstances, prompted by Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and after thorough consultations and reassessment of our national security needs. We believe it constitutes a limited and proportionate response to an acute and ongoing threat. This step sends a clear message from the countries sharing the border with Russia: we are ready and able to take all necessary measures to defend our population, territory and sovereignty.

On March 18, 2025, the Defence Ministers of the Baltic States and Poland issued a joint statement recommending withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention. Subsequently, the Government of Estonia initiated a respective draft law. The Parliament of Estonia adopted the Act on the Withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention on June 4, 2025, thereby completing the national legislative process. The President of Estonia promulgated the Act on June 13.

In accordance with Article 20, paragraph 2 of the Convention, Estonia will soon formally notify all States Parties, the Depositary, and the United Nations Security Council of its decision. The instrument of withdrawal will be accompanied by a full explanation of the reasons motivating our decision.

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates,

Let me underline that the withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention does not alter Estonia's unwavering commitment to international humanitarian law, including both customary international law and treaty obligations, notably the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977.

Estonia recognises that, in any armed conflict, the right to choose the methods and means of warfare is not unlimited, and that military operations must be conducted in accordance with the fundamental principles of military necessity, humanity, distinction, and proportionality. We remain fully committed to taking all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects during armed conflict. We acknowledge the continuing relevance of the humanitarian objectives set out in the Ottawa Convention.

Estonia also remains strongly committed to international cooperation and assistance aimed at addressing the humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war. We have regularly contributed financially to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and engaged in bilateral and multilateral humanitarian mine action initiatives. Estonia reaffirms its readiness to further support efforts that alleviate the suffering caused by anti-

personnel mines, with particular attention to areas where contamination poses the most acute threat to civilians.

Honourable Delegates,

We are grateful to have had the opportunity to present our positions at this meeting. Estonia remains committed to engaging transparently and constructively with all States Parties, in order to uphold the safety and dignity of civilian populations worldwide.

Thank you!