



**Statement to be delivered by South Africa on behalf of the Africa Group during the
Intersessional Meeting of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention**

17- 20 June 2025

Agenda Item 7(a) Universalisation

Madam President,

Allow me, on behalf of the Africa Group, to congratulate Your Excellency Ambassador ICHIKAWA Tomiko, for your able leadership and dedication in steering the work of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention during these unprecedented and challenging times. Your guidance has been pivotal in safeguarding the credibility and humanitarian purpose of this convention.

The Africa Group remains firmly committed to the goals of the Convention. We reiterate our long-standing position that anti-personnel mines are inherently indiscriminate and continue to have devastating humanitarian, socio-economic, and developmental consequences as well as constituting violations of human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law (IHL). These weapons have caused untold suffering across continents, maiming, killing, and traumatizing countless innocent civilians, including women and children even long after conflicts have ended.

The Africa Group has noted with concern the recent and worrying trend of withdrawals and intentions to withdraw from the Convention. While we understand that the global security environment has grown increasingly volatile, we believe that the strength of the Convention lies in its collective ability to address emerging threats within the framework of cooperation and solidarity. Withdrawal from the Convention risks eroding hard-won gains and undermines the confidence of the international community in the effectiveness and endurance of this vital instrument.

Madam President,

We take this opportunity to proudly highlight that over 92% of African Union member states have acceded to this Convention, making the African region the most universalized under the APMBC. This is a strong and living testament to the continent's political will and humanitarian commitment to achieving a mine-free world. Only a small number of states have yet to join, and we continue to encourage them, respectfully, to consider the overwhelming value of the Convention in saving lives and creating a conducive and an enabling environment to promote

socio economic development without the fear of explosions from the sites where mines are still being used.

We also wish to underscore the decision taken by the Government of Eritrea, which, despite the prospect of withdrawal chose instead to reaffirm its commitment and work within the Convention to resolve its challenges. Eritrea's decision demonstrates that solutions can be found within this forum, and it remains an important reminder that withdrawal is not the only path forward.

In this context, the Africa Group calls on all states that may be considering withdrawal to reconsider and return to negotiation table. The challenges we face today require more cooperation, not less. The sovereign right to withdraw must be weighed against the collective responsibility we all share to uphold the norms and humanitarian goals that this Convention represents. We also call on regional peers of those considering withdrawal to engage with them constructively and actively encourage them to reconsider their decision.

Finally, Madam President, the APMBC remains one of the most successful international instruments on this issue, and we must collectively preserve its integrity and universality. The Africa Group calls on States Parties, civil society and international community to continue outreach to non-party states, particularly those who have raised legitimate concerns with a view of convincing them that their actions may risk contravening the spirit of this Convention, and emphasise the importance of this convention to avoid explosions and in order to increase more accession and adherence to its norms.

The Africa Group further calls on states to continue to show solidarity, patience, and understanding, especially toward those facing unique challenges, and extend support to all states striving to fulfil their obligations.

Thank you.