

ICRC–IFRC Joint Statement on Universalization of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Intersessional Meetings, 20 June 2025

This statement is delivered on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its 191-member National Societies. We are grateful for the opportunity to address this Intersessional Meeting. It is delivered by representatives from the Finnish Red Cross and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society.

Madam President,

Nearly three decades ago, the international community took a historic step. Faced with the devastating humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines, lasting long after conflicts had ended, it chose to act. The adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was a landmark achievement.

When it was adopted in 1997, the overwhelming majority of landmine victims were civilians – often displaced people returning to their homes, trying to rebuild their lives, or farmers seeking to live off their land. A high number of victims were children whose young lives were abruptly cut short, or forever altered after stepping on a mine, be it on their way to school or while playing outdoors. Therefore, a total ban and the shared goal of elimination of anti-personnel mines was necessary.

Thanks to this Convention, many regions of the world are now safer for civilians going about their daily lives. More than 55 million anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, and vast areas of land have been cleared and returned to communities. These efforts led to the number of casualties dropping by over 75 per cent from its peak in the late 1990s. These are not just statistics – they are lives saved, futures restored and communities rebuilt.

Madam President,

The Convention has been a remarkable success. Today, over 80 per cent of States have joined this global commitment, taking concrete steps to implement the ban on anti-personnel mines. By prohibiting weapons that indiscriminately maim and kill, the international community has prevented untold suffering and demonstrated what is possible when united by a common humanitarian purpose.

Yet the work is far from over. Every day, in countries still contaminated by these weapons, Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff continue to witness their impact. These volunteers and staff assist victims, promote safer behavior, and work to reduce risk. Their efforts are a reminder of both the progress we have made and the urgency of our continued commitment.

We would therefore like to take this opportunity to express our congratulations to the State Party – the Marshall Islands – that recently decided to join this global community. We further call on signatories and other non-party States to join the Convention.

Madam President,

International humanitarian law (IHL), including this Convention, exists to protect people in the darkest times, based on the experience drawn from war's battlefields and their human costs. To adopt these rules in times of peace and to abandon them in times of war or increased tensions is to misunderstand their meaning entirely. To abandon them because the adversary does not respect them leads to a dangerous downward spiral, of which civilians will pay the price.

States withdrawing from such treaties risk eroding life-saving protections and threaten decades of global efforts to eradicate these inhumane weapons. This is a step backward with devastating humanitarian consequences, exposing civilians to a lasting risk of death and injury.

Let us be clear: the limited military utility of these weapons has not changed since the Convention was adopted in 1997. The humanitarian impact remains just as severe. In fact, the recent rise in the use of anti-personnel mines has coincided with the highest casualty rates seen in the past decade and, unsurprisingly, civilians made up 84 per cent of all recorded casualties. There is no indication that technological advancements have made these weapons any less harmful or problematic.

We deeply regret any decision to withdraw from this Convention and urge all States concerned to reconsider their position. Now is the time to stand firm.

Finally, Madam President,

As a global Movement present in every conflict and among communities suffering the consequences of these weapons,

we call on all High Contracting Parties to:

- recommit strongly and visibly to the Convention and make it clear that their commitment to the Convention is unwavering
- refrain from withdrawing from the Convention or any other IHL treaty they are party to, and immediately suspend any withdrawal process that may be underway
- defend the humanitarian norms and speak out about the dangers of withdrawing from humanitarian treaties
- reaffirm the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines, the Convention's achievements and effectiveness and what is at stake if we allow that progress to be undone
- condemn any use and transfer of anti-personnel mines by any actor under any circumstances.

We also call on 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.

Thank you.