



Permanent Representation of Belgium to the United Nations Office
and other International Organisations in Geneva

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Dear members of the mine-action community,

The world around us is increasingly uncertain. Belgium is deeply concerned by the severe pressure international humanitarian law is presently experiencing. The use of lethal force is limited by rules, and for good reason. These rules are based on humanitarian and ethical considerations. Other pillars of the rules-based international order experience similar strain, such as the UN Charter, being relentlessly violated by a permanent member of the Security Council.

In this world of uncertainty the Mine Ban Convention remains a beacon of hope. It is our collective endeavour to put an end to the suffering caused by these indiscriminate weapons. Against this backdrop, Belgium reiterates its strong commitment to the Ottawa Convention, and to upholding the norm against anti-personnel mines.

Belgium warmly welcomes the Marshall Islands to this family of nations, bringing us one step closer to a mine-free Pacific. The commitment of the Marshall Islands illustrates that this Convention and its humanitarian objectives continue to appeal. This new accession, for the first time since 2017, reenergizes our collective efforts to universalize the norm enshrined in this Convention.

We would also like to express Belgium's appreciation for the steps other States not yet party to the convention have already taken to adhere to the spirit and to a number of principles and norms shared within the Convention. We thank the delegation of Tonga for the update provided. Belgium welcomes Tonga's commitment to accede to the Convention and applauds the steps taken in this regard. Belgium wants to continue to encourage all states that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Convention.

At the same time, five European States have announced their intention to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention against the backdrop of a deteriorating security landscape caused by Russia's aggressive behaviour. We thank these States for being present here today. Although not an alternative to being party to this Convention, Belgium looks forward to their future continued participation in the meetings of the Convention, and hopes that they keep on subscribing to the humanitarian objectives of this Convention and continue to strive jointly for a world free of anti-personnel mines.

Madam President,

Even in our right to self-defence we are governed by certain rules. If not, we would witness the proliferation of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction. In the same vein, we recognize that IHL does not operate on the basis of reciprocity.

Belgium firmly believes that an adequate military and security defence does not imply the use of anti-personnel mines, and that their use cannot be reconciled with International Humanitarian Law. The military utility of these crude weapons will never outweigh their humanitarian cost. This calculus was made three decades ago and remains as relevant today.

Madam President,

We hope that together we can continue to build on the success stories of this Convention, and that the stigma that surrounds the use of these weapons will be upheld.

I thank you.