

## **IHLI Statement on Thematic Session B: Strengthening the Nexus Between the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda Through Concrete Actions**

Madam/Mr. President,

We express our sincere appreciation for this important discussion on enhancing the links between the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

At the Initiative on Humanitarian Law and Youth (IHLI), we believe that integrating a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention is not only a humanitarian imperative but a foundational pillar for sustainable peace. Women are among the groups most affected by landmines, yet they are also peacebuilders and defenders of their communities. We take pride in the fact that the majority of our members are young women committed to amplifying their voices and acting as genuine partners in humanitarian disarmament efforts.

In this context, we co-organized a webinar with LUISS Women in International Affairs – LUISS University, Rome, entitled: "Women, Peace, and Security in the MENA Region."

The event aimed to provide a multidimensional platform for dialogue on the complex challenges facing women in times of conflict and to formulate actionable recommendations to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

The webinar brought together academics, practitioners, activists, and youth leaders from Palestine, Iraq, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, and beyond. Sixty-one individuals registered, with 28 actively participating, the majority of whom were women. This reflects not only their strong engagement but also their central role in peace and security dialogues.

However, despite this momentum, the event reaffirmed the notable absence of young women from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in United Nations disarmament discussions, including those related to the Mine Ban Convention. This absence stems from a lack of support, limited opportunities, and structural barriers that continue to hinder youth participation at international levels. In fact, even obtaining sponsorship to attend this meeting was a challenge—today I stand here representing my peers and voicing their concerns.

The participants of our webinar sent a clear message:

"We are not waiting for permission to participate—we are already leading." Therefore, we urge the international community, governments, and donors to match this youth leadership with real financial support, political commitment, and policy reforms to open the space for the next generation of women leaders.

In implementing the Convention, we emphasize the need to empower young women in our region—not only through civil society engagement but also through their formal inclusion in governmental delegations .

At IHLI, we are working to address this gap by building the capacities of young women and connecting them to international networks. We believe that empowering diverse youth voices contributes to more unified and inclusive solutions.

We call on Arab States to:

- Enhance the representation of women in their official delegations to international meetings related to landmines.
- Support youth-led feminist initiatives in the region, enabling their active contribution to relief, reconstruction, and development efforts.

We also welcome the emphasis placed in the Siem Reap–Angkor Action Plan (2025–2029) on the role of the Convention in advancing the WPS agenda and supporting the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions. But we highlight the importance of drawing lessons from other disarmament instruments, such as:

- The **Convention on Cluster Munitions**, which has created meaningful space for youth engagement and recognized their role.
- And the efforts of **Argentina** under the **Arms Trade Treaty**, which has actively listened to and is exploring ways to integrate youth voices into disarmament discourse.

Accordingly, we recommend :

1. **Ensure the full and meaningful participation of women** in all stages of mine action—from awareness and clearance to planning and monitoring—not only as beneficiaries, but as decision-makers.
2. **Empower women leaders** in mine-affected communities through capacity building and the allocation of adequate resources.
3. **Collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data** to understand how landmines affect women and girls differently, and to tailor responses accordingly.
4. **Strengthen collaboration with national WPS mechanisms** to develop action plans that integrate mine-related challenges.
5. **Involve young women from affected areas** in awareness-raising and advocacy efforts, recognizing that youth—especially young women—are at the heart of sustainable change.

**Women's and girls' empowerment is not a supplementary element—it is essential to the effective and inclusive implementation of the Convention** and to building a future where no one is left behind.

Thank you.