



## Press Release

### Afghanistan leads world's largest meeting of landmine experts and officials and highlights ever-growing use of improvised anti-personnel mines

**Geneva** – Over 600 delegates representing 113 States (103 States Parties and 10 that have not yet joined), international and non-governmental organisations are meeting at the UN in Geneva from 26-30 November, to take stock of challenges that remain in implementing mine clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

The Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties (17MSP) was opened on 27 November 2018 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, H.E Salahuddin Rabbani joined on the opening ceremony by the Afghanistan Ambassador to Switzerland and the UN in Geneva H.E. Suraya Dalil and by the Convention's Special Envoy HRH Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein of Jordan, Jesus Martinez, Founder of El Salvador's Network of Landmine Survivors, and high-level representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

The theme of improvised anti-personnel landmines is high on the Meeting's agenda. "We are confronting new challenges, especially in conflict settings, arising from large-scale new contamination from landmines and other improvised explosive devices, including those used by terrorist groups and armed non-state actors," said H.E Salahuddin Rabbani. "Countering the threat of IEDs is an imperative being pursued by Afghanistan, nationally and internationally."

"In 2017, over 2,000 Afghans were killed or injured by landmines and explosive remnants of war. This figure marks a substantial increase in comparison to previous years", he added. In spite of challenges faced, Afghanistan has continued to meet its mine clearance commitments, "To this end, we are pleased to report that approximately 3,000 square kilometres have been cleared and over 19 million landmines and explosive remnants of war destroyed since demining operations first began in 1989."

The Convention's Special Envoy, Prince Mired of Jordan, also highlighted the greater damages inflicted by antipersonnel mines of an improvised nature. "Today, an unfortunate situation exists in which anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature are being used on a larger scale than ever before. We must continue to condemn the use of these weapons by any actor anywhere. We must strongly urge all mine-affected countries, including those affected by weapons of an improvised nature, to embrace the concept of ownership and to take the issue at hand very seriously; it is the only way, we believe, that true progress will be realized," said HRH.

The meeting comes on the heel of the Landmine Monitor report 2018 showing a rise in landmine casualties, mainly as a result of growing use of improvised mines. According to the Monitor, civilians account for 87% of casualties, children representing nearly half of these figures. This means new generations will require sustained care and rehabilitation for decades to come, many in some of the poorest regions of the world.

On that, Jesus Martinez Founder of El Salvador's Network of Landmine Survivors, who lost both his legs to a landmine more than two decades ago called on the meeting to fulfil their victim assistance obligations under the Convention.

**The Convention** is the prime humanitarian and disarmament treaty aimed at ending the suffering caused by landmines by prohibiting their use, stockpiling, production and transfer, ensuring their destruction and assisting the victims of these weapons. The Convention was adopted on 18 September 1997 and entered into force on 1 March 1999. Together, the 164 States Parties have destroyed more than 51 million landmines and 158 States Parties have fulfilled their stockpile destruction obligation.