



EUROPEAN UNION INCREASES SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

Vienna, Brussels, Geneva – The European Union (EU) has announced additional support to help countries implement their obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention which bans the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of these weapons.

The EU reaffirmed its strong support for the Convention during the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties taking place in Vienna. Over 400 representatives of government, international and non-governmental organisations are meeting at UN Vienna to address the implementation of the landmark disarmament and humanitarian treaty signed this December 20 years ago.

“The EU condemns the use of anti-personnel mines by any actor, whether States or non-state actors. We also appeal to all States not party to the Convention and non-state actors to stop manufacturing, trading and using these weapons,” said Jacek Bylica, the EU’s Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-proliferation during the meeting.

“Particularly worrying is the use of improvised anti-personnel mines in the context of urban warfare, specifically aimed at terrorising civilians and hindering the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. This is a key driver in forcing people to leave their homes and a major factor behind the current refugee crisis,” added Jacek Bylica.

“The use of improvised anti-personnel mines has created new large-scale contamination in Iraq, Libya and Syria resulting in a reversal of the downward trend in the number of global mine casualties for the second year in a row since the entry into force of the Convention. The new threats must be addressed with determination, without distracting attention from the vast areas across the world that remain inaccessible due to legacy mine contamination,” said Bylica referring to countries like Angola, Cambodia and Zimbabwe which are still suffering the effects of landmines planted decades ago.

“Their impact continues to disproportionately affect rural communities, usually some of the poorest, as well as minorities and marginalised groups. They should not be forgotten. In light of these developments, it is necessary to reaffirm our commitment with regard to international cooperation and assistance, as the obligation to rid the world of anti-personnel mines is a collective effort by all States Parties.”

European Union financial assistance to mine action

The EU and its Member States are one of the world’s largest donors for humanitarian mine action. EU assistance includes mine clearance, risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction, and benefits nearly all heavily affected countries, including Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Syria and Ukraine.

In the 2012-2016 period the EU through its institutions and Member States, committed over €600 million to address the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war in conflict-affected countries.

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

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Some States Parties to the Convention however, need additional capacity-building support to identify and overcome remaining challenges if they are to fulfil their ambition of a mine-free world by 2025.

The European Union through a Council Decision will allocate an additional €2.3 million to promote the universal adherence to the treaty including through the Convention's Special Envoys Prince Mired of Jordan and Princess Astrid of Belgium. Other projects under the Council Decision will help States Parties to implement their mine clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance commitments under the 2014 Maputo Action Plan of the Convention.

"The Decision will facilitate national stakeholder meetings in mine-affected countries with relevant authorities, international and non-governmental organisations, donors and mine-affected communities. In the spirit of partnership embedded in the Convention, the implementation of this Decision will include the participation of the 1997 Nobel Peace Co-Laureate the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other relevant UN and international organisations," said the EU Special Envoy.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

The Convention was adopted in Oslo and signed in Ottawa in December 1997. To date, there are 163 States Parties – last week, heavily mine-affected Sri Lanka joined the treaty. Together, the Parties have destroyed over 51 million landmines and liberated millions of hectares of once contaminated land. To date, 30 States have declared being mine free, while 31 continue to implement their mine clearance obligation. 29 States Parties have declared responsibility for a large number – hundreds or thousands – of landmine survivors, including some of the poorest in the world, and face significant challenges in fulfilling their responsibilities.