



Press Release

Addressing mine ban treaty challenges: new contamination and compliance

Geneva, 21 June 2023 – Geneva – The annual Intersessional Meetings of the Convention closed today with more than **450 delegates representing 91 States and 60 international and non-governmental organisations** – these meetings amount to the world’s second largest gathering of mine action experts and state officials with the first being the Meeting of the States Parties scheduled for November in Geneva.

The Meetings, chaired by Germany, were opened by the President of the Twenty-First Meeting of the States Parties (21MSP), the Director the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland, and Selma Guso from Bosnia and Herzegovina in representation of mine-affected communities and survivors.

The packed agenda saw reports from nearly 20 States Parties that have indicated responsibility for the well-being of landmine survivors including some of the poorest countries on earth. Some of them sounded the alarm **on dangerously low levels of funding** allocated by international assistance to life-saving and/or rehabilitation programmes, leaving vulnerable communities in even more dire circumstances especially in conflict zones.

More than 30 States Parties spoke on mine clearance and new contamination by anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature which is a major challenge in places like **Colombia, Nigeria, and Yemen**. Nigeria, the most populated country in Africa, which had concluded its mine clearance obligation in 2012, is experiencing new contamination. Nigeria announced the creation of a new mine action structure to coordinate clearance and provision of assistance to the growing number of victims of these improvised mines.

Chad has requested support from the international community to address not only mine clearance and risk education but also to support mine victims. Chad also indicated that **clearance of border areas with Sudan** is of the utmost importance to prevent loss of life and limbs of the thousands of refugees arriving daily from the neighbouring country. Chad has enacted an emergency plan to impart risk education in the growing refugee camps but says it will require international support for its already stretched resources

New contamination on European soil

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has made of the State Party one of the most mine-contaminated in the world with the number of mine victims increasing, reaching nearly 500 by anti-personnel mines since the conflict began.

On the alleged use of anti-personnel mines by its armed forces in 2022 (as reported by Human Rights Watch which the Convention President addressed on 3 February), Ukraine stated that it has no information that can corroborate the claims. “We take seriously any claims on alleged violation of use of anti-personnel mines in Ukraine’s jurisdiction or control”, said the Ukrainian official from the Ministry of Defence. Ukraine said it will work to investigate the claims made. “Ukraine is a reliable member of the international community and fully committed to the implementation of all international obligations including to the non-use of anti-personnel mines as a means of warfare”.

Ukraine further added that even while exercising its right to self-defence, Ukraine has not sought to use this prohibited weapon. “We remain fully committed to the principles of the Ottawa Convention, to the letter and spirit of the Convention,” concluded the delegation. Various States Parties expressed their support for Ukraine while also inviting Ukraine to provide information in a transparent manner, on its efforts to carry out an investigation as soon as possible.

Other European countries that still have mine contamination include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia.

“Mid-year assessments of our efforts are the backbone of the Convention”, said Ambassador Göbel. “As conflicts around the world drive up casualties including hundreds of children, we must stand to say ‘stop the mines’. Our Convention against any use, production, stockpiling, or transfer of anti-personnel mines is a humanitarian imperative; so is to support the thousands of victims worldwide even after all clearance efforts have ceased”, concluded the Ambassador.

Greece which still has outstanding stockpile destruction obligations, announced that it would be transferring its remaining anti-personnel mines to **Croatia** for destruction. "The transportation of the mines is scheduled to take place in the upcoming days and the Hellenic Defence Systems company, is making all the necessary arrangements to ensure a smooth, safe and timely delivery that will put the destruction process back on track", said the Greek delegate.

The States Parties also addressed the situation of **Eritrea** which is in a state of non-compliance after failing to report on its clearance efforts or present a request to extend its deadline to clear its remaining contamination. The Presidency indicated that according to its mandate it will continue seeking a cooperative dialogue with Eritrea while ensuring full respect for the implementation of the Convention's provisions. The Intersessional Meetings were chaired by **Germany** and hosted and supported by **Switzerland**.

Editorial note: The Convention was adopted in Oslo and signed in Ottawa 25 years ago with support of a core group of states including Germany and Switzerland; it entered into force in 1999. It is the prime humanitarian and disarmament treaty aimed at ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines by prohibiting their use, stockpiling, production, and transfer, ensuring their destruction, and assisting the victims. Together, the States Parties have destroyed over 54 million anti-personnel mines. Landmine clearance under the Convention has contributed to peace and development by making millions of square metres of land safe again for normal human activity.