

Press Release



After decades of work, Algeria one of the most mine-affected countries in the world, is now free from this scourge

Geneva and Algiers, 10 February 2017 — The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria has just formally announced in Geneva, that after decades of work, it has fulfilled its mine clearance obligation under the *Ottawa Convention* clearing 93 mined or suspected mined areas, including 78 former mine barrages, and destroying more than one million antipersonnel mines. Algeria becomes the second North African country in meeting its demining obligation under the Convention and the 30th in the world.

«Thanks to decades of sustained efforts, strong national demining capacities and engagement by authorities at the highest level of government, Algeria can proudly announce that it has fulfilled its landmine clearance obligation, contributing to the Convention's humanitarian aim to end the suffering and loss of human lives caused by antipersonnel mines. As a result of our efforts, there are now **1,035,729 less mines** in the world», said Colonel Ahcène Gherabi, Director of Algeria's National Demining Programme, during a mine action meeting at the United Nations in Geneva.

The first phase of demining in Algeria took place from 1963 to 1988, before it acceded to the Convention. «During this period, two demining units were dedicated exclusively to this work, which were then reorganized. From 1988 to 2004, landmine clearance operations were carried out only as necessary», indicated the Colonel. The mine clearance program restarted formally in 2004, two years after the Convention entered into force for Algeria in 2002.

«**Over 120 million square meters of land** were cleared and released for normal use. Thanks to humanitarian demining activities carried out entirely with Algeria's own resources, Algerians can once again feel safe when moving in such areas and using their land», remarked Colonel Gherabi. The last landmine was removed on November 30 2016 at 10:10 am. «Algeria has been meeting the needs of landmine survivors even before the entry into force of the Convention and will continue to do so for the years to come.»

In 2005, Algeria fulfilled its stockpile destruction obligation under the Convention, destroying 150,050 landmines. Algeria has been actively involved in the work of the Convention, including by presiding over the treaty in 2013.

«What Algeria has achieved is remarkable», said Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria to the United Nations in Geneva and President of the Convention. «Algeria has shown great political will and a high level of national ownership meeting a significant challenge, that of eliminating all anti-personnel mines from its territory. Algeria fulfilled the entirety of its obligations under the Convention by devoting its own national resources. The resolute commitment of Algeria is a motivation for other States Parties affected by this scourge, that the realization of a mine-free world is achievable», said the Ambassador.

The *Ottawa Convention*, or Anti-Personnel Mine Ban 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 162 States Parties have destroyed almost 49 million landmines. Since 2016, 158 States Parties no longer have anti-personnel mine stockpiles.