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Statement by Bulgaria on behalf of the Co-Chairs of the Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention

Mr President,

Bulgaria and New Zealand had the honour this year to serve as co-chairs of the Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention. Part of that role is to oversee compliance with the Convention, and particularly compliance with the most important prohibition the treaty contains: the prohibition of use. The Mine Ban Convention has already established a powerful norm - the use of antipersonnel mines is not acceptable and cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. It is the responsibility of every State Party to the Convention to ensure compliance with this norm. The use of antipersonnel mines has harmful humanitarian effects and any allegation of non-compliance should be of utmost concern to all States Parties.

There have been a number of such allegations this year.

In our capacity as co-chairs of the Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention, and in furtherance of the aims of Article 8 of the Convention, Bulgaria and New Zealand sent letters to four States Parties earlier this year to follow up on concerns about compliance. We asked those States Parties to report and give further information about the respective allegations of use and we were pleased that all four States Parties came to the intersessional meeting in May ready to engage on these issues. We call on all relevant States Parties to continue to work in a constructive manner with a view to resolving all compliance issues as soon as possible.

Bulgaria and New Zealand are deeply concerned about the use of landmines in Yemen – the first confirmed use in a State Party – and, in the spirit of Article 8, we urge Yemen to investigate promptly and bring those responsible for the use of landmines to justice, as well as to commit to report to the States Parties, in a timely manner, on the steps that it has taken. We further strongly call on Yemen to take concrete steps as soon as possible to protect the civilian populations in the affected areas.

Mr President,

Compliance, and the manner in which concerns about compliance are dealt with, is one of the key indicators of the health of any Treaty. How States Parties handle the most serious of possible breaches of this Convention will be a clear indicator of their commitment to preserving its strength and integrity.

It is important that all States Parties continue to consider how each one of us can act, now and in the future, to implement the provisions of Article 8 and to facilitate ongoing compliance with the treaty. We look forward to hearing States Parties' views on this question today and at next year's Review Conference in Maputo.