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BY COUNTRY](#)[WHERE WE  
WORK](#)[HUMAN RIGHTS  
BODIES](#)[NEWS AND  
EVENTS](#)[PUBLICATIONS AND  
RESOURCES](#)[English > News and Events > DisplayNews](#)

## 18th Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

**Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
16 November 2020**

Excellencies,

Thank you for inviting me to this virtual meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention.

Last November, the States Parties took a strong stand against the continued and increasing loss of life due to anti-personnel mines – in large part resulting from the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that function as anti-personnel mines. The meeting today will be the first milestone towards the achievement of the Oslo Action Plan adopted last November. And although this is, by necessity, a virtual meeting, it is very important that it place human life, human dignity and human rights at its core.

The Mine Ban Treaty is a remarkable example of multilateral action for humanitarian aims. It has achieved a great deal, with many mine clearance and destruction operations; a significant slow-down in landmine production; and sharp reductions in landmine trading.

In real life terms, this means fewer people killed, burned and harmed in terrible ways. The horror of anti-personnel landmines is their continued infliction of casualties on civilians, long after any conflict has ended - and the resulting impact in reducing people's freedom of movement, access to agricultural land, and right to development. In many cases, the brunt of this broad socio-economic impact falls on women and girls; and when women and girls are maimed by landmines, they are more likely to be marginalised by their community.

Our UN Human Rights Office is particularly concerned about the widespread use of **improvised explosive devices** that function as anti-personnel landmines. These devices present unique challenges for mine clearance efforts and are responsible for rising numbers of civilian casualties in many contexts, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Mali, Colombia and the Philippines, among others.

We are also concerned that States Parties may revise their commitment to ending use of anti-personnel landmines. So-called **"non-persistent" landmines**, which are designed to self-destruct, do not ensure sufficient safeguards. They cannot distinguish between civilians and combatants, raising important concerns with regard to the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law - which are binding on all States.

Moreover, "non-persistent" landmines are prohibited under the Mine Ban Convention because, in the words of Article 2, they are "designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and to incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons."

Let me reiterate that no non-State actor or State – whether or not it is a party to the Mine Ban Treaty – has any justification for using such weapons. They are inherently indiscriminate. Their use causes

Excellencies,

In 1997, the drafters of the Treaty brought together international human rights law, international humanitarian law and disarmament in a single instrument. The Convention is not only among the most widely ratified disarmament treaties: it has changed mindsets, anchoring in the international community the conviction that landmines cannot be justified and should never be deployed.

I applaud your commitment to continue moving forward with this work. Your efforts to build and implement the Oslo Action Plan will bring release from suffering and injustice to countless people. They will ensure that the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men are considered, and confirm the full inclusion and effective participation of mine victims in all matters that affect them.

Anti-personnel landmines – including “non-persistent” landmines and improvised anti-personnel landmines – destroy lives, livelihoods and rights. They impact the right to life and to personal integrity, freedom of movement, the right to food, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to health, the right to education and many others. They prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid, and impede recovery and reconciliation for decades.

I am proud that my Office regularly reports on the use of explosive ordnance in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria and Yemen; supports independent investigatory bodies that have documented the use of mines; and plays a direct role in tackling some of the worst effects of anti-personnel landmines, including by protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created turmoil and upheaval everywhere, but it will not shake our commitment to this work.

In becoming States Parties to the Treaty, and honouring their commitments under the Treaty, your States demonstrate that we share vital values – a set of principles that can guide our work to meet many other human rights challenges.

Thank you for standing up for human rights.

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