

Delegation of Ukraine

National Statement at the 20th Annual Meeting of State-Parties banning the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines and on their destruction

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Alvaro Enrique Ayala Melendez of Colombia, for assuming the Presidency of the Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I wish to acknowledge also all efforts of your predecessor Ambassador Arango Olmos and her team for skilfully steering the preparations for this important meeting.

The 20MSP is expected to be a significant event against the background of the renewed massive use of anti-personnel mines in Europe, which surely shocked the imagination of the civil society, politicians, diplomats, military men, which strive to achieve the world free of antipersonnel land-mines. This noble goal was put forward by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), launched in 1992, already 30 years ago. We praise ICBL's role, while noting that we still have a lot of work ahead of us. Inspired by the humanitarian needs of the countries which suffered as a result of the widespread use of the antipersonnel landmines, which killed and maimed mainly civilians, including children, the group of like-minded countries managed to elaborate and successfully adopt at a diplomatic conference in Oslo on September 18, 1997 the Mine Ban Treaty, which was opened for signature in Ottawa on December 3-4, 1997, 25 years ago and become known to public as Ottawa Convention. To continue this list of anniversaries let me remind you that on 17 January 1997 the White House declared that the US will seek to initiate negotiations on a worldwide treaty banning the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva, while on 30 January 1997 in the Conference on Disarmament the United Kingdom proposed the mandate for an ad hoc committee on a ban on APMs, which was not accepted.

Regrettably at that time there was no window of opportunity to use existing disarmament mechanisms to achieve ban on APLs, since a number of important stakeholders relied and continue to rely upon APLs as a defense weapon in their military doctrines. This factor plays a detrimental role in our efforts to achieve universal ban on APLs.

Starting from February 24, 2022, Ukraine, which signed the Ottawa Convention in 1999 and ratified it on May 18, 2005, was brutally attacked by the RF, which was always reluctant to support the goals of the Ottawa Convention. In eight months of its war of aggression, RF has used almost 4500 missiles against Ukraine, which is blatant proof of its vehemence and hatred to Ukraine. Despite the fact that aggressor wages against Ukraine colonial-type war for the new territories, using heavy weapons, such as long-range artillery, main battle tanks, air-force and navy, APLs have a role to play in its military tactics. Firstly, upon seizure of some portion of Ukrainian land the occupying force started to lay mines in order to fix on the ground the results of its territorial gains, which clearly shows that APLs in many circumstances are an offensive weapon. Secondly, prior to withdrawal from the occupied territories the enemy disseminated APLs throughout the arable lands, in the houses, gardens etc. In this case the APLs are used as a weapon of terror in a manner comparable with the actions of a non-state actor.

In August 2022 the Russians did not hide their plans and openly blackmailed the whole world, declaring that they laid mines at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plants and are ready to blow it up and turn into a scorched desert

In the hands of RF the explosive material, including APLs, became the weapon of terror, which means that RF in its war against Ukraine is constantly committing the war crimes and the crimes against humanity.

According to preliminary estimates of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the total area of the territory of Ukraine, which is subject to survey and demining at this time is potentially about 177 thousand square kilometers.

167 pyrotechnic units with a total number of 1,036 people have been created in the system of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine for the clearance of explosive objects and humanitarian demining of the territory of Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine (as of October 13, 2022), the pyrotechnic units of Ukraine have carried out 30,124 engagements, detected, recovered and neutralized 235,607 units of munitions, including 2,124 aerial bombs, surveyed the territory of more than 72,580 hectares.

Taking into account the great threat posed by the explosive objects to the civilian population, Ukraine pays special attention to conducting educational activities on mine safety issues to ensure the safety of the civilian population. At the same time, our priority is to demonstrate the rules of safety and behavior in case of detection of explosive objects to children, especially of school age.

In view of the above facts the full actual implementation of Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention by Ukraine is possible after the end of hostilities and the withdrawal of all military formations from the territory of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, restoration of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within internationally recognized borders. In this context it should be noted that the decision regarding the extension of the deadline for the implementation of Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention will be made after the conditions are created under which it will be possible to realistically estimate the volume of mined areas.

I avail this opportunity to thank our partners for the assistance they provided to Ukraine for mine clearance and demining operations and express hope that their financial and technical assistance for this purposes will be continued.

Thank you.