

Press Release



On Convention anniversary, Algeria reaffirms commitment to a mine-free world destroying last landmines retained

Geneva and Algiers — After decades of demining work and successfully clearing its territory of all known anti-personnel mines, Algeria has gone a step further eliminating nearly 6,000 landmines it had retained for training purposes, becoming a country completely free of these weapons. The destruction of the remaining anti-personnel mines which Algeria had retained for permitted purposes under the Convention, took place on Monday 18 September, the day when the treaty commemorated 20 years since its adoption.

Lieutenant General Ahmed Gaid Slalah Vice Minister of National Defence, Abdelkader Messahel Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Tayeb Zitouni Minister of Moudjahidine, led the ceremony where the last 5,970 anti-personnel mines were destroyed. The President of the Convention, Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria to the United Nations in Geneva also attended.

Vice Minister Ahmed Gaid Slalah, reflected on Algeria's fulfilment of its Convention obligations when earlier this year it declared itself free of anti-personnel mines. "In three decades, almost nine million mines were detected and destroyed and 62,421 hectares of agricultural and pastoral lands cleared and released. Our hope is to see the fight of the international community against anti-personnel mines fully implemented by 2025," said the Vice Minister who also called for those countries that have not yet done so to join the Convention. Algeria completed its arduous demining operations "without any incident, in accordance with international standards for mine clearance four months before the deadline set for my country in the framework of the Ottawa treaty". Landmines in Algeria claimed 7,300 casualties.

The President of the Convention congratulated Algeria for "its commitment in liberating its territory from anti-personnel mines and fulfilling the humanitarian objectives of the Convention. This would have not been possible without the extraordinary commitment of Algerian authorities at the highest level of State and the allocation of significant national resources," said Ambassador Hajnoczi. The Ambassador also reflected on Algeria's contribution to the Convention's ambition of a mine-free world by 2025. "The successes of Algeria are welcomed by all those wanting to live in a safer and better world."

The Convention has been accepted by 162 States representing over 80% of the world's States. It was adopted in Oslo in 1997, and signed later that year in Ottawa. Demining efforts under the Convention have resulted in the clearance and release of millions of square metres of once dangerous lands and to a reduction in annual casualty rates in most countries. Together, these States have destroyed more than 51 million landmines.