

*Vienna, Geneva* – The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention's Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties (16MSP) has concluded a week of work in Vienna, Austria, recording success in stockpile destruction **with Belarus announcing it had destroyed over one million stockpiled landmines bringing to 159 the number of States that no longer have destruction obligations under the Convention. With Belarus' stockpile destruction, the States Parties have now destroyed more than 51 million landmines.**

The Conference involved more than 500 participants representing over 100 delegations including 95 States (81 States Parties and 15 that are not yet part of the treaty).

The Conference expressed concern for the ever growing use of improvised landmines which has driven up the number of casualties to its highest levels since the 1990s. The Conference agreed that more sustained and targeted efforts were needed if the international community is to meet its 2025 mine-free ambition. In addition, the Conference called for sustained assistance to victims of these weapons.

The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria and Head of the Austrian Department for Disarmament. The Ambassador, who also led the work of the Convention for the past year, was a key figure of the process that led to the adoption and signing of the treaty 20 years ago.

To commemorate the anniversary, several high-level personalities attended the meeting including the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Co-Laureate Jody Williams who was awarded the recognition for her work leading a coalition of non-governmental organizations around the world which rallied in favor of a comprehensive landmine ban.

## **Work of the Conference**

### **Clearing of all mined areas**

- **Thirty-one (31) States Parties are still in the process of clearing mined areas** including 12 in Africa, and 7 in Europe.
- One State Party, Afghanistan, has seen an increase in landmine contamination due to non-state actors' use of improvised explosive devices.
- Among the States Parties that must still fulfil their mine clearance obligation are some of the most mine-affected in the world including Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Colombia, Iraq, Serbia, Thailand and Zimbabwe. Some of these countries will require additional technical and financial support if they are to meet the 2025 ambition set by the States Parties.
- The Conference expressed concern that **Ukraine** is now in a state of non-compliance and called on Ukraine to submit a request for extension of its mine clearance deadline as soon as possible.

### **Five States Parties requested and were granted extensions on their mine clearance deadlines under the following conditions,**

- **Angola** which joined in 2002, requested an 8-year extended deadline, the Conference agreed and provided a 31 December 2025 new deadline. Angola said it would require additional US\$ 348.4 million to complete clearance and reported that in the last four years, there had been 361 new victims, including 158 children.
- **Ecuador** which joined in 1999, requested an additional eight years for mine clearance. The Conference granted Ecuador three additional years, until 2022 instead. Ecuador indicated that funding for humanitarian demining operations were interrupted in 2016 after a massive earthquake hit the country. Ecuador's funding for mine clearance is US\$ 20,937,735. The Conference requested Ecuador to submit an updated demining plan.
- **Iraq** which joined the Convention in 2007, requested until 2028 in part due to new contamination from improvised anti-personnel mines. The Conference granted Iraq until 2023 instead. Since 2008, Iraq has allotted a total of US\$ 249,973,551 to its mine action activities. In total Iraq has

demined 551,358,178 square metres. In the process, Iraq destroyed a total of 124,072 anti-personnel mines. Due to the current security situation and fight against the Daesh, Iraq has been unable to survey new contaminated areas.

- **Thailand**

### **Destroying stockpiles**

- After missing its original deadline, **Belarus** indicated that it had fulfilled its obligation under the Convention destroying all its stocks of anti-personnel mines banned by the Convention. Belarus said it had destroyed over 300,000 mines with TNT filling, and more than 3 million Soviet-era PFM-1 mines, which are extremely hazardous and pose serious technical difficulties to destroy. Belarus achieved this goal with the full support of the European Union.
- **Greece** has faced a unique challenge since 2014 when a deadly explosion of a Bulgarian destruction facility—where Greece’s stocks were being destroyed—halted its efforts. Greece indicated it has undertaken conversations with Bulgaria “to destroy the remaining mines in Bulgaria instead of transferring them back to Greece”.
- **Ukraine** face particular challenges in meeting their deadline, as PFM-1 mines are extremely hazardous and pose serious technical difficulties to destroy.

### **Universal adoption of the Convention**

- **Sri Lanka** joined the Convention just days before the meeting and was welcomed by the Conference as the newest State Party. Their accession is important as it will encourage others in a region with low adherence.
- On the last day of the Conference, 21 December, **Palestine** indicated that it would adhere to the Convention.
- 163 States are party to the Convention including the majority of States that have been affected by landmines; all members of the European Union; every State in Sub-Saharan Africa, and every State in the Americas except for Cuba and the United States.
- 35 States have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention. Combined six of them – China, India, the Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Russia and the United States – may hold tens of millions of stockpiled antipersonnel mines. All of these but South Korea and Russia attended the Convention as Observers and expressed agreement with the Convention’s humanitarian objectives. Syria and Myanmar attended but did not address the Conference.

### **Next Presidency**

The conference elected **Afghanistan** as the next presidency of the Convention effective immediately following the Meeting and throughout 2018. Afghanistan will also chair the Convention's **Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties (17MSP)** from 26-30 November 2017 at the UN in Geneva, and prior to that, will lead a Pledging Conference on Implementation of the Convention and the Meeting of the Standing Committees both in Geneva.