

Statement by Bangladesh
Agenda 6: Renewing Political Commitment

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates and participants,

Bangladesh appreciates the Government and people of Norway for making excellent arrangements for the Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. The Convention has reached yet another milestone this year with the 20th anniversary of its coming into effect.

Bangladesh was the first South Asian country to have ratified the Convention in 2000 in pursuance of our Constitutional obligation to general and complete disarmament. In 1972, in a war-ravaged independent country, we had to undertake demining of the Chittagong Port – the lifeline of our economy – with the support of the then Soviet Union.

Bangladesh has been engaged in mine action as a contributor to UN peacekeeping operations in a number of conflict situations around the world. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, Bangladesh forces are deployed in the two areas that would be crucial for mine clearance in the country within the stipulated deadline. Outside the UN, Bangladesh has remained engaged in mine clearance in Kuwait, having cleared more than 4.5 million sq km of area till date. We welcome the recent accession to the Convention by Oman and the State of Palestine among other OIC Member States.

Our troops consider mine action to be a critical task for delivering on their mandate of protection of civilians. The widespread threat and use of mines of an improvised nature, however, compromises the safety and security of both civilians and peacekeepers. The number of casualties our peacekeepers have suffered in recent years in DRC, Mali or Central African Republic makes us convinced of the need for a comprehensive approach to mine action. To this end, we find it advisable to consider anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature under the remit of Article 2 of the Convention, and encourage informed discussions on the observations by the

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It is also required of non-UN forces deployed alongside UN peacekeeping missions to be conversant with the relevant UN standards and guidelines.

In our immediate neighbourhood, we are directly affected by the use of anti-personnel mines by the Myanmar armed forces leading to indiscriminate casualties along our borders. Anti-personnel mines were allegedly emplaced there in order to prevent the return of the forcibly displaced Rohingya following their mass exodus to Bangladesh since August 2017. It is perhaps time to look into legal safeguards and redress for State Parties affected by the irresponsible conduct of States Non-Party on their borders.

It is particularly distressing that the Myanmar authorities remain in a denial mode about the use and production of anti-personnel mines by and for its armed forces, and tend to attribute the responsibility mostly to armed non-State actors. It is further disturbing that the State Parties and regional or international entities that partner with Myanmar on victim assistance and mine risk education opt to remain largely silent on such violation of international norms by the State itself. We stress that such omission or silence only helps perpetuate the Myanmar official narrative and implicates the concerned international partners in the crimes being committed targeting innocent civilians among the Rohingya. We draw the attention of the esteemed Special Envoys of the Convention to this issue as part of their advocacy on universalization.

In consideration of our various international engagements and external threats, Bangladesh is obliged to take a pragmatic and responsible approach to exercising its prerogative under Article 3 of the Convention. We look forward to fulfilling our obligations under Article 9 to coincide with the 20th anniversary of our joining the Convention next year. We recall our previous work as part of the Convention machinery and underline the need for geographic spread in the Committee memberships.

We commit ourselves to supporting implementation of the Oslo Plan of Action due to be adopted by this Conference. We stress the importance of consensus in making the Plan of Action truly inclusive and representative of the concerns of all 164 State Parties. The international community's collective efforts and achievements in the last two decades bolster our conviction about creating a mine-free world for the lasting peace and sustainable development of all our peoples.

I thank you.