



Belgium

Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines

Oslo, 25 – 29 November 2019

Renewing the political commitment to the Convention (Agenda item 6)

Mr. President,

The international norm against the use of anti-personnel mines stands strong. Retention and use by States have decreased enormously since the entry into force of the Convention. However, the last four years the number of casualties has risen dramatically. This is largely due to the use of mines of an improvised nature by non-States actors. This represents a complex challenge, as our Convention is an undertaking by States. We nevertheless have a number of tools to address this situation. Universalizing the Convention is one of them. This would strengthen the international norm and reinforce efforts to bind non-State actors to the same commitments.

We have achieved a common understanding that anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature fall under the scope of our Convention. We need to further refine our approach. In this context, we welcome and support the paper introduced by the ICRC on "improvised explosive devices". More than an issue about terminology, this is a question of remaining fit for purpose and ensuring full compliance with the obligations under the Convention.

We also need to enhance our resilience against mines of an improvised nature. Action on a national level is crucial. States parties can take measures to prevent the production or the transfer of improvised mines or their components. They can collect data on types and characteristics of mines of an improvised nature and use this information to improve prevention and risk education. On the international level, best practices can be shared and areas of cooperation identified.

Mine risk education is essential in order to avoid casualties and to save lives. We welcome the inclusion of a dedicated segment in the Oslo Action Plan. In present-day conflict, contamination is often caused by multiple sources. In this respect, Belgium supports a comprehensive effort towards explosive ordnance risk education, not limited to the threat of anti-personnel mines only.

Mr. President,

Anti-personnel mines impact differently men and women, adults and children, soldiers and civilians. Recognizing these different exposures is a prerequisite for a tailored approach, adapted to the specific needs of each and every one. Women need to be fully involved in shaping mine action and, more broadly, in disarmament affairs. The presence of many women in this Conference is therefore encouraging. My country commends Norway for making gender a transversal priority across all pillars of the Oslo Action Plan. My delegation also supports the gender recommendations proposed in the Presidency's machinery paper, in particular the inclusion of gender and diversity into the mandates of each Committee. The nomination of gender focal points would be instrumental in mainstreaming these issues into our approach regarding all domains of the Convention.

Regarding Belgium's continued commitment to a mine free world, let me refer to new contributions in 2019, namely 800.000 euro for projects in Chad and Fallujah, Iraq, 1 million euro for the ICRC special mine call and 2 million euro for UNMAS activities in Iraq and Syria.

Finally, Belgium acknowledges the interaction between mine action and humanitarian and development actions. Mine action allows for the safe return of refugees and the resumption of economic activities. Houses should be cleared of booby traps. Minefields should be turned into playing fields. Families should have access to safe ground.