

STATEMENT

**by Viacheslav Yatsiuk, Head of the Delegation of Ukraine,
Ambassador of Ukraine to the Kingdom of Norway, at the Fourth Review
Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
(Oslo, 29 November 2019)**

Mr. President,

May I also thank Norway for its hospitality and commend your leadership and innovative methods in organizing this Review Conference of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention.

For example, we all remember the inspirational videos that you showed us at the beginning of our proceedings, including that wish of good luck with our conference by one of the demining workers. Many of us noted a sound of irony in his remarks. It is absolutely imperative for all of us to lessen the divide between the world of the international conferences and the real world outside, be able to arrive at effective solutions and not be afraid to answer difficult questions.

One of such unanswered questions for 45 million of Ukrainians is why, after Ukraine voluntarily gave up its third largest nuclear potential in exchange of international security guarantees, their country is attacked by one of the guarantors and permanent members of the UN Security Council. The unprovoked aggression by Russia against Ukraine brought a lot of sorrow and suffering to the Ukrainian people, and, yes, one of its direct results is the increase in the number of casualties due to landmines.

Mr. President,

I would like to stress that despite significant challenges in the security field, Ukraine is doing its best to comply with its obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

As a direct consequence of the aggression of the Russian Federation, which is not a party to the Ottawa Convention, and despite Ukraine's compliance with this instrument, about 7 to 8 thousand square kilometers were mined or allegedly polluted by explosive remnants of war and mines, primarily anti-personnel, in the area of the Operation of the Combined Forces in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In this connection, one of the major challenges for Ukraine is demining.

By acceding to the Ottawa Convention Ukraine committed itself to get rid of the existing at that time APLs stockpiles on our territory. Ukraine takes seriously all its international obligations, and despite all challenges and new circumstances that are beyond our country's responsibility, has no intention to abandon its original Mine Ban Convention commitments taken in 2005.

Ukraine is determined to destroy the existing APLs inherited from pre-independence times. Altogether more than 6,6 million APLs have to be destroyed. Ukraine has been making a constant progress in completing this task. In current difficult situation Ukraine still manages to direct funds from the State budget to the purpose of the APLs destruction.

Mr. President,

Ukraine has been constantly promoting universalization of the Ottawa Convention, including supporting relevant United Nations calls for the accession to the Convention by those states which have not done so yet. We strongly believe that universalization of the Convention is one of the key prerequisites to ensure full and complete implementation of its goals. The need of the Convention universalization should be kept addressed as three dozen countries still remain outside.

Mr. President,

According to the United Nations report, the Donbas region is becoming one of the most mined areas in the world as the result of Russian aggression in Ukraine. Mines, explosive remnants of war and booby-traps caused over two thirds of all civilian casualties. The OSCE has repeatedly complained that terrorists have not stopped mining activities, despite pledging to do so according to a ceasefire. This situation has resulted in contamination with APLs on a scale not seen for decades.

Providing assistance to victims of mines and explosive remnants of war is very important for residents of areas where military operations were conducted or continue to be conducted. It requires the implementation of a set of measures to provide medical, psychological, professional and social assistance in order to reduce the effects of injuries caused by explosive objects.

I would like to reiterate that Ukraine fully supports the aspirations of the like-minded states to overcome the humanitarian crisis caused by a large-scale proliferation and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel land mines and also wishes to see the world free of this type of weapons.

Mr. President,

Let me stress once again that Ukraine has been and always will be the responsible and reliable international partner respecting all obligations under the Convention. Once control over the liberated territory of our country restored we proceed promptly with clearance of mined areas. Currently it is not possible even to identify all areas in Ukraine in which APLs are known or suspected to be planted.

To conclude I wish to stress that Ukraine stands ready to engage constructively with all the partners to improve the current situation and move closer to the Ottawa Convention 2025 goals.