

State of Palestine

Mr. President,

Today we discuss an issue of vital importance to the worth and value of human lives, the banning of cruel and inherently indiscriminate weapons that have destroyed thousands of innocent human lives and remain a threat to civilian communities for decades to come. They are the source of terror to communities that live around them, and whose future and right to opportunity and development is hostage to their destructive threat.

Twenty years after the Mine Ban Convention's entry into force, landmines continue to be used as tools of war and continue to kill and injure innocent civilians long after conflicts end. Unfortunately, and despite the important accomplishments we have achieved thus far, the horrific figures of landmine casualties are on the rise, including the highest annual total of child victims recorded since 1999 according to the latest figures. With the number of landmine victims rising, we believe there is an urgent need for the international community to broaden the scope of implementation and prevention.

Besides maintaining strict observance of the Convention's norms and complete implementation of its respective time-bound obligations, serious actions ought to be taken by states parties to the treaty, including holding those who continue to use and stockpile this hideous weapon accountable. Our unqualified commitment to ending the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines for all people at all time, and aspire to end the era of anti-personnel mines, require more proactive steps and serious actions at all levels. This is particularly true in light of the rise in conflicts that is funded and perpetuated by irresponsible arms trade and war mongers; forces that aim at unravelling the international rules-based order and take us to dark places that humanity thought it had overcome.

Mr. President,

As a new member of this Convention, Palestine is ready and willing to uphold the norms and objectives of the Convention at all levels to guarantee that we achieve our common goals of a mine-free world.

In this respect and long before acceding to the Convention, Palestine established a Higher Committee for Mine Action in 2012, as an inter-ministerial body, which

in turn set up the Palestine Mine Action Center (PMAC). In 2013, PMAC started clearance efforts and submitted a voluntary Article 7 report the same year. Palestine continues these efforts and has adopted a Strategic Plan for 2017–2020 and we are currently developing and adapting legislation concerning mine action to fulfil the Convention's obligations.

Despite the difficulties and obstacles Palestine faces, due to the presence of Israel's illegal occupation and the limited resources, we have cleared 6 out of 16 fields inside villages and population centers which pose the greatest danger to the lives of Palestinian citizens. We have completed the first part of the clearance of 136 dunums in the Holy Baptism site and Church's lands and buildings. We also started clearing the second section of 500 dunums of minefields adjacent to Church lands in the same area.

Our work has not been limited to clearance operations. We have found that our citizens are suffering from other military remnants, whose presence is linked to the occupation. In this regard, Palestine has undertaken to get rid of these military remnants despite the obstacles and restrictions imposed by the occupation.

Mr. President,

Raising awareness is also key to these efforts. That is why PMAC is implementing programs to raise awareness among effected communities. Through the 2017-2020 strategic plan that was developed in cooperation with UNMASS, we hope that we will be able to reach most of the affected areas' population of 600,000.

The survey teams of mine victims are still doing their mission to accomplish their difficult task of counting and documenting the number of victims. This is because of the lack of resources and the difficulty of reaching these areas of affected persons, again, due to the obstacles imposed by the occupation. Therefore, we look forward to working with international partners to further enhance the capacity of our teams to speed up the survey, especially since available data indicate that there are between (1000-1200) cases, whether injured or killed, while currently only 450 cases only have been documented.

The State of Palestine thanks all those who have supported us in our efforts to rid our land from landmines, whether in qualifying our cadres or supporting the clearance programs in Palestine. In particular, we express our appreciation to UNMASS for their efforts in this regard.

Mr. President,

Twenty years ago, the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was humanity's response to the agony caused by the anti-personnel landmines, which destroyed the lives of tens of thousands of civilians and threatened the lives, limbs and livelihoods of people who could not safely access land, properties and natural resources in their communities. The achievements under the treaty have been extraordinary. But much more needs to be done. We look forward to working with States parties to bolster our work under the Convention and to adopt an outcome that empowers the mine ban movement towards achieving the noble goal of a Mine Free World.

Thank you, Mr. President

