

## **PRIORITIES OF AUSTRIA DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION**

Santiago, 1 December 2016

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is a major achievement to protect civilians. The result of close co-operation between the – now 162 – States Parties and civil society to ban a complete class of weapons deemed especially insidious and to address the plight of their survivors is historic.

Since its adoption in 1997, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has become a global success story, a trail-blazer for humanitarian disarmament. The number of casualties has gone down by two thirds, mine clearance returned large areas of previously contaminated land to productive use, more than 51 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines (APMs) have been destroyed by States Parties and today only a handful of countries are still producing APMs. In 2015, however, the number of people killed or injured by APMs, as well as victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs), remnants of cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) has risen sharply. In the same year financial support for mine action fell to the lowest level since 2005.

This poses a challenge to the international community and we have to redouble our efforts, both nationally and collectively, to meet the Convention's goals to the fullest extent possible by 2025 as pledged by the States Parties in the Maputo Declaration.

In line with the humanitarian dimension of our foreign policy, Austria has been a staunch supporter of a ban on APMs since its early days. During the drafting process of the Convention Austria was a key player and later chaired the First Review Conference in Nairobi. As a token of our continued commitment Austria wants to make a particular contribution by its candidacy for the presidency during 2017, the year of 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signature of the Convention in Ottawa. We will strive for cooperation among all States Parties as well as with civil society to achieve tangible results in the implementation of the Convention, thereby making this planet a safer place.

### **1. Universalisation**

Having 162 State Parties is a great success, but no reason for complacency. Austria wants to reach out to the remaining States that have not yet acceded or ratified and to establish an Informal Universalisation Group to intensify our common efforts.

### **2. Victim Assistance**

Building on the achievements of the Chilean Presidency we want to further the full inclusion of survivors so as to empower them and their families to exercise the full panoply of their human rights on an equal and fair basis with other members of their communities. This objective will be pursued in close cooperation with the respective mandate holders also of the CMC, CCW and CRPD, involving furthermore the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities, OHCHR, ILO, UNICEF, WHO, UNWOMAN, ICRC and non-governmental organizations such as ICBL and Handicap International.

International co-operation between affected countries and other States Parties to the Convention should be increased going beyond medical treatment. Integrating victim assistance activities under the Convention into wider policies for rehabilitation and inclusion of persons with disabilities as well as into a broader development, human rights and humanitarian framework would make the use of available resources more efficient. Austria intends to foster the implementation of the recently published cross-conventional guidelines by States Parties and to promote increased funding for victim assistance.

### **3. Mine Clearance**

In order to meet our 2025 objective, we have to do our best to be more effective and efficient in the implementation of the Convention's mine clearance obligations through intensified national and international action including an increase in funding. Best practices in land release could be applied universally. This will help ensure expensive clearance assets are deployed only where evidence of mines exists. More effective partnerships between clearance operators (both national and international), national authorities, and international donors should be sought. Austria would like to congratulate additional countries on becoming mine-free in 2017.

### **4. Stockpile Destruction**

Stockpile destruction remains an ongoing challenge for a number of States Parties, requiring follow-up action for which assistance may be required. In some cases meeting deadlines has posed a challenge, and addressing these cases should be a priority. In addition, a number of States Parties have retained a high number of APMs for training and other permitted purposes. However, year after year, the numbers reported as retained remain the same which questions the need for retaining them. We seek to engage with actors during our presidency to find creative ways to overcome challenges to meet this core obligation of the Convention.

### **5. Budgetary Issues**

States Parties individually and collectively have to transmit in full and in time the necessary resources for the ISU and the holding of Meetings of States Parties. As we have seen recently the activities of the ISU and the very holding of a Meeting of States Parties are at stake, when some States Parties do not pay as foreseen. The presidency would prefer to focus on substantial work, but will not fail to take on the burden of engaging also here in order to safeguard the orderly functioning of the structures created under the Convention. As an initial effort on this issue in 2017 and following the example of the Chilean Presidency, Austria would foresee holding a Pledging Conference on 28 February.

#### **Dates for 2017:**

28 February 2017

8 to 9 June 2017

18 to 22 December 2017

Pledging Conference in Geneva

Intersessional Meeting in Geneva

16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties in Vienna