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Statement delivered by Dr Dr h.c. Barbara Haering
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Ceremonial opening of the Twenty-second Meeting of the States Parties of the APMBC
Geneva, 1 December 2025

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A year ago, in Siem Reap, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to the APMBC. Our message was clear: the ban on anti-personnel landmines remains strong. Given the international security situation as well as increasing pressure on international humanitarian law, this reaffirmation was crucial. The Convention is an important part of a broader humanitarian framework consciously built by States and international organizations over the last decades. Thus, it is imperative to recall the fundamental rationale of the APMBC: protecting civilians from the devastating impacts of landmines, both during and after armed conflicts. The GICHD greatly regrets recent withdrawals from the Convention and is concerned by arguments in favour of anti-personnel mines as means of warfare.

The Review Conference in Siem Reap delivered an ambitious yet pragmatic Action Plan that builds on twenty-five years of experience – successes and lessons learnt. The Action Plan strengthens the fundamentals of the Convention: national ownership with sustainable capacities, evidence-based planning, and the inclusion of survivors and affected communities. Let me highlight three elements of the Action Plan that particularly resonate with our work at the GICHD.

First, the contribution of the Convention to the **broader humanitarian, peace and development context**. Mine action is a humanitarian imperative and at the same time an enabler of human dignity and human rights, recovery and stability, as well as a sustainable development and gender equality. Since 2017, the GICHD has delivered evidence on the contribution of mine action to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, showcasing its impact beyond square meters cleared. Building on this work, we are currently undertaking a joint study with the Food and Agriculture Organization on linkages across mine action, food security and agriculture in three countries. The study shall support the integration of needs of rural populations and potential impacts on productive ecosystems into mine action. The GICHD is also exploring ways to better integrate explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) within broader humanitarian efforts. Risk education is a vital pillar of the APMBC and an essential measure to protect civilians from threats of landmines and other explosive hazards, especially where clearance is slow or hampered. A systematic implementation of risk education reduces casualties and restores safe access to livelihoods and essential services. We are looking at integrating risk education and Conflict Preparedness and Protection (CPP), shifting towards comprehensive community preparedness and anticipatory action. However, risk education remains underfunded. Thus, we urge States Parties to ensure a sustained support to explosive ordnance risk education and to embed it across protection and humanitarian programmes.

Second, the Action Plan embraces a **broad notion of innovation** extending beyond technologies and tools, including policies, approaches and methods. With nearly one third of the world affected by explosive ordnance contamination, with conflicts and victims on the rise, innovation in mine action is urgent. It has always been at the core of our work at the Centre to make mine action safer, faster, and more effective. A month ago, we offered a global Innovation Conference in Luxembourg to more than 300 experts, practitioners and decision-makers exploring how innovation can accelerate progress towards a mine-free world. The event emphasised the broad significance of innovation. We are talking about collaboration, context-specific solutions and sustainable financing models that link humanitarian purpose with operational impact. Our sincere thanks go to Luxembourg, Switzerland and to the European Union for supporting this conference.

And third, inclusivity. For the first time, an APMBC Action Plan explicitly references the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Both agendas share common goals: peace, recovery, and advancing human rights in conflict and post-conflict settings. Yet, strategic and operational alignment between the two agendas need to be strengthened to mutually harness their full potential. The Action Plan operationalizes gender, diversity, equality and inclusion with specific actions, indicators and requirements regarding disaggregated data. A recent GICHD brief provides recommendations on how to integrate mine action into Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans. Following these recommendations will leverage the potential of both agendas. Thus, we warmly invite all of you to attend our side event on Thursday.

Taken together, the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan offers us clear guidance. However, success will depend on our collective determination to turn commitments into action on the ground for people living with the daily consequences of landmines.

Madam President, thank you for your stewardship through ought this year and thank you, Juan Carlos Ruan and your team for your dedication in supporting the implementation of the APMBC. We greatly value our cooperation, and we remain committed to supporting the implementation of the Convention also in the years to come. We are ready to assume our responsibility in this crucial moment when clarity, unity, and leadership determine the future.