

**Statement by Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Barbara Haering
President of the GICHD Council of Foundation**

**Sixteenth Meeting of States Parties the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Opening Ceremony, United Nations Office at Vienna, Austria, 18 December 2017**

Mister President, Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – and rightly so. At the same time and after many years of continuous decline in the number of new victims, we are witnessing the reversed trend today. New and protracted conflicts such as in Syria, in Iraq, in Ukraine and in Yemen increase the suffering caused by land mines; the suffering we are fighting against since more than 20 years. In Syria and Iraq the use of improvised antipersonnel mines has reached an unprecedented scale. This is unacceptable and must be addressed as a matter of urgency – here in Vienna, but first of all on the ground. Mine action organizations are already called upon to survey and to clear such new contaminations often in urban areas and sometimes close to still ongoing hostilities. Also in these contexts, there must be no compromise with the fundamental humanitarian objectives and principles guiding mine action. Ensuring that mine action organizations are perceived as responding to humanitarian needs solely, and not in support of political or military agendas, is more important than ever and must be assessed vigilantly.

We are commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. And also new contamination shall set no question mark to the political commitment captured in the Maputo Declaration in 2014: to finish the job by 2025 at the latest. This still can be done – and by now, we know the key factors for success:

1. It's first of all a strong national ownership and commitment and we are welcoming Sri Lanka as new member to the Convention and congratulating Algeria for its achievements.
2. Secondly, a sound strategic planning and our experts are committed to support where ever and whenever needed – as they did in Zimbabwe during the last year;
3. Thirdly, the application of the latest standards, methods and tools and we are striving to offer state of the art support – as for example information management system that can be jointly used by several partner organizations on the ground.
4. And finally, sufficient resources, both at the national and international level.

Securing sufficient resources has become a key challenge for our organizations. All the more we should make best use of result based management as well as of the framework provided by the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Developments Goals. We are part of this Agenda and the contributions of mine action to the SDGs are impressive as shown by the GICHD study launched in June of this year 2017. Thus, the Agenda 2030 provides impetus also for new partnerships. This is particularly relevant when it comes to collaboration with the private sector and charities, which are expected to assume an important role in SDGs implementation.

We are proudly honoring the 20th anniversary of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – since this treaty is the cornerstone of our efforts to end the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines. The Convention has established a new norm, saved thousands of lives and allowed for a better future for many communities and countries. Its strength and success is based on a unique and sustainable coalition of states parties, international organizations, the strength of non-states actors and experts. In this context I would like to address our special thanks to Elisabeth Decrey-Warner, co-founder and Executive President of Geneva Call, who will move on at the end of the year. Almost 20 years ago Elisabeth entered into a long-term commitment to our cause, and has done so with the persistence of a marathon runner. We commend the complementary approach of Geneva Call, addressing non states actors and the results it achieves.

Let me finish by thanking all of you for your commitment and continued support for the Convention through ought the last twenty years. It is now our responsibility to preserve the spirit, the enthusiasm and the endurance that led to the signature of the Treaty, and to continue our efforts to turn them into sustainable changes in the field – for the sake of humanity and in view of sustainable developments. The GICHD will continue to support all efforts to end the suffering with its expertise.

Thank you for you collaboration and for your attention.

Barbara Haering