

**Opening remarks by Dr Barbara Haering
President of the Council of Foundation of the GICHD**

18MSP APMBC, Geneva, 16 November 2020

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me extend my sincere gratitude to the Sudanese Presidency, the Coordinating Committee and to the ISU for their tremendous commitment and for their ability to adapt and to adjust their work to new circumstances throughout this year and also for letting us meet today in this virtual but global space. I am impressed to see how relentlessly our community has worked and delivered on our commitments to the Convention and to protect people's lives threatened by the risks of anti-personnel landmines – even in a year that turned out to be particularly challenging.

During this week, we are convening to track progress towards implementing the Oslo Action Plan and to fulfilling the Convention's obligations; but also to send a clear signal. We are meeting to remind ourselves, our States and the international community of the importance to uphold the norm against landmines. At a time when uncertainties prevail, conflicts increase and multilateralism has been challenged; at a time when we all are impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Convention remains as strong as ever.

This year has seen a strong resilience of the mine action community, in spite of the unprecedented global health crisis. We have all worked hard to find innovative ways to ensure the delivery of services to affected communities and States Parties. However, as the pandemic continues we are also facing longer-term risks, not only at the operational level, where they are evident, but also in terms of international attention and funding for mine action. Thus, we must ensure that those affected by the threat of anti-personnel landmines are not forgotten. The need for mine action remains undiminished.

Mine action is a humanitarian act and a key enabler for security, peace and sustainable development including gender equality. Mine action saves lives and allows for economic benefits through land released as well as by the large number of national staff employed. In deteriorating economies, these benefits are significant. Our common cause shall therefore be kept high on the international agenda as well on our own national agendas!

One year ago, the States Parties adopted the Oslo Action Plan. The Action Plan is a clear milestone for our sector. The commitments made by States are relevant, ambitious but realistic. When implemented, they will show lasting impact on communities affected by landmines. Moreover, output, outcome and impact achieved under the Oslo Action Plan will be measured by coherent indicators. This result based approach will make our work more effective, more efficient and will allow us to identify timely where improvements or adaptations are required. Let us all become learning organizations to best serve communities affected by the risks of landmines.

During this week we will hear about the continued efforts by States Parties, international organizations and NGOs to clear land, to provide long-term support to survivors, to strengthen risk education and to advocate for the norms set by the Convention. How far have we been progressing towards the targets set a year ago in Oslo? How can we do even better and faster? And how can we identify and alleviate obstacles on our road towards a mine-free world? Knowing this will make all the difference for our important humanitarian cause.

I wish us all a successful eighteenth MSP.

Thank you.