

# **Begrüßungsworte von Staatsministerin Keul**

**anlässlich der Eröffnung des**

## **21. Vertragsstaatentreffens der Ottawa-Antipersonenminen- Konvention unter deutschem Vorsitz**

**(20.11.2023)**

Mr. President,

Mr. President designate,

Excellencies,

Friends of the Ottawa Convention,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is not normal these days to speak about an arms control treaty that is still existing and relevant.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I am here to speak to so many state parties present.

Anti-personnel mines are a perfidious, long-lasting risk for the life and well-being of everyone living in contaminated areas - even decades after conflict.

I don't need to spell this out to you.

We are looking back on over 25 years since the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty.

In these years we have worked together for the comprehensive outlawing and banning of anti-personnel mines.

Over 25 years of assisting victims of anti-personnel mines, destroying stockpiled mines, and clearing contaminated land.

When we look at how the Ottawa Convention came about, one thing is striking: civil-society and international organizations together with a core group of 18 states joined forces and worked together on that specific aim: to ban landmines.

This collective effort shaped a cornerstone of arms control and has advanced international humanitarian law decisively.

It is this spirit of the Ottawa Convention that defines the Mine action community even in these difficult times.

In times when traditional arms control instruments, are threatened and paralysed by States Parties that show no interest in cooperation for the sake of protection of civilians as we have seen last week in the CCW.

The humanitarian objectives remain as relevant as ever.

There are still far too many civilians being killed or injured by antipersonnel mines, in Myanmar, Afghanistan or Ukraine, where we even observe another increase in their use.

We therefore welcome Ukraine`s announcement to investigate allegations of the use of anti-personnel mines by Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Germany already provided 20 Mio Euro to Ukraine in order to facilitate humanitarian mine action.

Landmines destroy livelihoods and hinder safe return of IDPs. Not to forget: most of the victims are women and children.

Therefore, the task remains clear:

Clearing mines and supporting victims leads to safety, a sustainable development, and reconciliation – in short: a life in dignity.

Luckily good examples do exist:

In the mountainous area of Majevica in Bosnia and Herzegovina five municipalities from both the federation as well as the Republica Srpska came up with a plan for sustainable development in their region through tourism.

They secured international investment, but mines all around the area were the most important impediment to this project.

Through the work of our partners, Mines Advisory Group and Norwegian People's Aid, this impediment is being cleared as we speak.

By the end of 2024, the region will be mine-free. This will allow socio-economic development and reconciliation in a former conflict area.

This is only one of many examples of why we are convinced of the importance and the potential of our joint fight against anti-personnel mines.

A potential that goes far beyond making land safe again.

German funding for humanitarian mine action is oriented towards contributing to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus wherever possible.

We choose comprehensive approaches to answer in the best possible way to the specific needs of those we want to protect.

Our support encompasses all areas of mine action: from survey and clearance to risk education and victim assistance as well as advocacy and national capacity building.

When delivering humanitarian mine action, we rely on strong national and international partners.

Ladies, gentlemen,

Next year's Review conference will give us the opportunity to take a step back and look at the instrument at our hands.

Do we need to adapt our means?

States Parties are facing new challenges:

How do we deal with improvised anti-personnel mines?

How can we continue clearing under extreme weather conditions, like flooding?

How can we make best use of limited resources when new and ongoing wars and conflicts are constantly leading to additional contamination, while in other countries the legacy of past conflicts still threatens human lives?

How can we assure inclusive and conflict sensitive ways of assistance?

In order to find answers to these questions, we have made these topics priorities of our Presidency.

We have set out to look at three priorities and two cross-cutting focus areas:

Firstly, universality is key to the Convention.

Unfortunately, none of the remaining 33 non-member states actually joined, but we had many constructive conversations over the year, and we were able to set up the universalisation coordination group.

Secondly, we propose to look into possibilities for more effective cooperation between mine-affected and assisting states.

Today's panel will focus on this important topic.

And thirdly, we have looked at the challenges of improvised antipersonnel mines.

We continue to address this issue in various formats such as the two side-events this week.

We have programmed funding that will continue well beyond our Presidency to tackle this most urgent issue.

Finally, two cross-cutting issues need our further consideration:

Firstly, mine action can only reach and fully benefit all members of affected communities if implemented in an inclusive, gender and conflict sensitive way.

And secondly, extreme weather and the climate crisis do not stop for mine action- as we have seen in South Sudan, where recurring flooding of contaminated land worsened the situation.

Adapting to extreme working conditions for deminers will be key for the next years.

At the same time, we want to protect and preseve the environment and still reach the efficiency needed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The German Government remains firmly committed to the Ottawa Convention's goal – to support States Parties in facing the new challenges ahead and to support affected communities in coping with the severe humanitarian consequences of mine contamination.

While this is paramount to us in our current role as Presidency of the Convention, we stand ready to continue in that spirit once our presidency will have come to an end.

Let me finally thank you, Mr. President designate, for having agreed to take over the Presidency of next year's Review Conference.

I would like to assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation.

I now look forward to the discussion and important inputs for next year's Review Conference and the upcoming action plan.

Thank you very much.