

**Twenty-third Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II**

**10.12.2021**

**General exchange of views**

**Statement Austria**

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, let me thank you Ambassador for your leadership in taking Amended Protocol II forward and strengthening its implementation, despite difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

We fully align ourselves with the statement by the European Union and would like to add some remarks in our national capacity.

Austria remains firmly committed to Amended Protocol II, which constitutes a crucial instrument of international humanitarian law, and that is contributing to our clear aim of reducing the humanitarian suffering and harm caused by mines, boobytraps and other devices.

We share the view that efforts on universalization efforts must be intensified. We reiterate our call to all States, and in particular all High Contracting Parties of the CCW, who have not yet done so to join this Protocol or to take the step from the regular to the amended Protocol.

We remain concerned about the humanitarian implications and security threats of IEDs, including direct and reverberating effects, of immediate, mid-term and long term humanitarian consequences, of which often civilians bear the highest cost. We acknowledge the important contribution by the Group of Experts on AP II on IEDs and are grateful for the efforts by the two coordinators, France and Colombia. The discussions in August were indeed useful and the proposed update of the IED declaration a welcomed step.

Among the many important concerns related to IEDs, we wish to highlight the humanitarian effects, which are of a particular severe nature in populated areas. The negative effects include also security, political stability and socio-economic development. We further stress the importance of full involvement and equal opportunities for participation for both women and men, including in countering the threat posed by IEDs, as well as for addressing the threat of IEDs. The gendered impact of IEDs is well documented. Duly taking into account the differential impacts of IEDs on women, girls, boys and men facilitates countering the threat posed by IEDs. We hope that this will be adequately reflected in the political declaration, which is currently under preparation.

Let me also express our appreciation for the research conducted by UNIDIR in this area as well as its very useful voluntary self-assessment tool to assist High Contracting Parties in identifying gaps and challenges in their national regulation and preparedness.

Mr.Chair,

Mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM) has been another important area of the CCW and within the Amended Protocol II.

Austria reiterates its continued concerns about the humanitarian impact caused by MOTAPM. We support the call for focused discussions on the issue within the Convention, including at next weeks`s Review Conference. We join others in reiterating that there is scope for State Parties to further examine in the context of the protocol how best to minimize humanitarian harm arising from the use of MOTAPM in compliance with IHL. We thank Ireland for its welcomed proposal for the 2022 Annual Meeting of AP II to *discuss policies and practices that High Contracting Parties have implemented under Amended Protocol II with respect to MOTAPM, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians*. We believe that the specific language proposed earlier today for the report of the meeting, provides a helpful avenue to have a focused discussion on this important issue and we are looking forward to receive this text in writing.