



**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Apostolic Nuncio,  
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other  
International Organizations in Geneva at the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the States  
Parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention**

*Geneva, 25 November 2022*

Señor Presidente,

Ante todo, la Delegación de la Santa Sede desea felicitarle por su elección para presidir esta reunión y también agradecerle a su país, Colombia, por el arduo trabajo y el compromiso que sigue dedicando a la Convención sobre la prohibición de minas antipersonales.

Mr. President,

Enrooted in a humanitarian perspective, this Convention has achieved notable success and contributed to efforts of peace and reconciliation by placing the human person at the center of concerns through a sense of shared responsibility. Now, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention offers the chance to look back at what has been achieved, but it also prompts us to look at what still has to be attained.

Anti-personnel landmines, in particular, embody a shaky and artificial approach to security guided by the conception that the other is an “enemy”. Every person seeks peace, the opposite of fear. Conflicts disfigure the bonds between people and between States, with civilians always bearing the brunt of the suffering. In particular, anti-personnel landmine victims, among whom far too many are children, are a stark reminder of the cruelty and tragedy of conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. President,

The testimonies that we have heard during the opening session of this Meeting are a motivation not to lose sight of the fact that mine clearance, stockpile destruction and assistance to victims are not just legal obligations. They are ethical imperatives that must remain firmly before our collective conscience. Only by fully respecting the letter and spirit of the Convention can we also honor the dignity of the too many direct and indirect victims of landmines. It is essential not to let anti-personnel landmine victims also fall victim to what Pope Francis has denounced as the “globalization of indifference” in a “throwaway culture”.

The Holy See, including through the institutions of the Catholic Church across the world, continues to contribute to victims’ assistance and is grateful to other countries and many NGOs which do so. It is fundamental to continue to make financial and human resources available as a concrete expression of solidarity of a true family of nations. Cooperation and solidarity should remain the watchword.

In this regard, the many volunteers and peacemakers that offer their contributions are commendable in many aspects. This Delegation would like to stress that the spiritual assistance and accompaniment of victims and their family is also an important aspect not to be overlooked.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Message of His Holiness Pope Francis signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, to the President of the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines, Oslo, 29 November 2019.

Mr. President,

A mine free world does not equal a world free from victims. Moreover, it will not be possible unless the Convention is universal. The Holy See strongly exhorts all States who are not yet parties to the Convention to adhere to it, and in the meantime to halt the production and use of landmines.

In today's world, we must not be afraid to pose the question: why are massive resources and technological research allocated to the development of deadly weaponry and not towards making prosthetics for victims more adaptive and affordable? Why do we keep investing in instruments of death and indiscriminate and unnecessary suffering and not into instruments of life and peace?

In closing, allow me to renew Pope Francis' call to continue to place the human person at the center of our concern and "make every possible effort to foster dialogue and promote a culture of peace."<sup>2</sup> In fact, we know all too well that, in the face of social injustice, peace cannot, and will not, survive.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*