

Speech: “Anti-personnel landmines are nothing short of indiscriminate killers.”

Mr. President,

I'd like to thank Mr Zuev and Ms Ochoa for their vivid briefings and I want to particularly thank you for bringing this issue before the whole of the Council. It's an issue that we seldom discuss, but it has an impact on conflict after conflict ever since the United Nations came into existence. Sadly those impacts are still being felt in too many places today.

To simply treat this as another issue on our agenda would be a mistake. Anti-personnel landmines are nothing short of indiscriminate killers. They don't recognise sides in conflicts. They recognise no age or affiliation. I am proud to represent a country that wants to see an anti-personnel mine-free world. In 1995, our predecessors sat round this table and unanimously adopted a resolution recognising the global threat posed by those devices. At the time, we focused on Rwanda and a select group of countries. Two years later Princess Diana walked the streets of Kuito, Angola, greeting children affected by the scourge of landmines. She spoke with the survivors and saw the human face of an epidemic; a man-made epidemic. One that took the form of a 100 million mines scattered throughout more than 70 countries. 20 years ago, landmines claimed a new victim every 20 minutes.

That was the state of play two decades ago. And in the face of what seems to be insurmountable odds, we collectively said then that this must end. Later that year we came together as governments, civil society, and survivors from round the world to channel momentum and agree a treaty banning anti-personnel mines.

20 years later, we've undoubtedly come a long way. But 2015 showed what's at stake if we take our foot off the accelerator. That year saw a 75% increase in casualties from 2014 and it was the most deadly year on record since 2006. This marked increase is largely due to the increase in use of improvised anti-personnel mines by non-state armed groups in the Middle East. What's worse is that of the 6,461 people killed or injured that year, more than 1 in 3 was a child.

The thousands who lost life and limb do not tell the full story. Millions more are forced to live alongside land littered by anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. By virtue of their very existence, livelihoods are put at risk. They prevent children from attending school. They prevent farmers from growing crops to feed their communities. They prevent humanitarian aid from reaching those in need and they make the journey home impossible for refugees.

It is for all these reasons that the United Kingdom announced in April that

we would be increasing our support for anti-mine action. We announced more than \$125 million for the UK Global Mine Action Programme over the next three years. These funds build on the existing \$38 million dollars our Department for International Development has already committed to and that will be used to clear 150 square kilometres of land of mines, cluster munitions, and other explosive remnants of war. Because of these projects 800,000 people will no longer live under the threat of landmines and 100,000 people will receive education on the dangers they pose. The United Kingdom is also making significant progress towards meeting its obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention to demine the Falkland Islands after we announced a new \$25 million dollar programme phase in September last year, which we are implementing now.

And we are focusing our efforts on the countries where we can make the biggest impact, where the greatest number of people live in the shadow of explosive remnants of war. By the end of the three years, Afghanistan, Somalia, and South Sudan amongst others will be among those that have benefited from this UK-sponsored project.

Sadly, this will not be enough. 60 countries and four territories are still contaminated with landmines. Nearly a dozen of these have more than 100 square kilometres that have been forfeited to mines. Landmines are still destroying opportunity and hope. If we are to restore that hope, we must come together again, as we did 20 years ago. Ending this will require money, education and survivor assistance. We call on each and every government that will speak in this Chamber today to play their part.

Mr. President,

As conflicts subside today, the explosive remnants of war do not. Landmines respect no ceasefire. They respect no peace agreement. In any given week this Council discusses the need to end violence, conflict and war in some part of the world. If we don't tackle the global scourge that is landmines, we are putting those who have emerged through conflicts even further behind.

20 years ago, we showed that collective action was possible. Now it's time to finish the job.

Thank you.