

Thank you, Mr. President. I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of the 13 member organizations of the Gender and Diversity in Mine Action Working Group - APOPO, Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines, Danish Church Aid, Danish Refugee Council, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the HALO Trust, Humanity and Inclusion, ICBL-CMC, Mines Advisory Group, Mines Action Canada, Mine Action Review, Norwegian People's Aid, and SEHLAC.

We have already taken the floor earlier in this meeting to express our support, as organisations working on the ground, for the gender and diversity language in the current draft Vientiane Capital Action Plan and Political Declaration, which is well-drafted and supports our work with affected states in making our response to cluster munitions and other explosive ordnance more effective.

However, we feel we must take the floor again to reiterate this support, in response to attempts from a small number of states to politicise previously accepted language. In recent months there has been debate and dialogue over the gender and diversity language in the previous drafts of the action plan, which has been taken into account by the Presidency. No edits were proposed to this language of the **most recent** draft of the **action plan** in advance of this meeting. We are concerned by our observations of the debate this week on the outcome documents, that new proposals have been made so late in the process, that significantly weaken agreed understanding of the role of gender and diversity. We remind states parties that the preamble of the Convention recognises “the need to provide age- and gender-sensitive assistance to cluster munition victims and to address the special needs of vulnerable groups” and also recognizes UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security. This was the consensus in 2008 in Dublin, and we question why this should not remain the case in 2026, here in Vientiane.

We note that a small number of states have chosen several times in the past, such as at the 2nd Review Conference of this Convention, to accept the outcome documents with reservations on the language on gender and diversity. If states feel they cannot subscribe to the previously accepted language, then this remains an option for them to take.

Last night we heard an appeal for the outcome documents to be more operational so we encourage states parties to take into account the perspective of the mine action operators and civil society organisations represented in our group.

Thank you Mr President