Commemoration of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

9 April 2015, Addis Ababa

EU Statement

1. First of all, I wish to thank the Commission of the African Union and the UN for organizing today's commemoration to continue to promote awareness of the terrible dangers posed by mines and Explosive Remnant of Wars.

2. The EU is united in pursuing the objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, with all 28 EU Member States now States Parties. Last year, many of us gathered in Maputo for the Third Review Conference on the Ottawa Convention to discuss the remaining challenges, which require the concerted attention and efforts of all States Parties, and to reaffirm our shared commitment to ending the unnecessary suffering and casualties caused by the use of anti-personnel mines across the world. States Parties to the Convention have undertaken to never, under any circumstances, use anti-personnel mines. In that context, the EU appeals to all State and non-State actors to refrain from the use of anti-personnel mines.

3. The EU and its Member States have a long history of support for mine clearance and the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, as well as for assistance to victims, making them the leading donor of international assistance in this area. The Action Plan, which was agreed last year at the Maputo Summit, will guide our work for the next review cycle in a focused and efficient way. The EU is currently working on a new Council Decision to provide funding for the implementation of the Maputo Action Plan to ensure progress in the next phase of the implementation of the Convention's
provisions and to make a crucial step towards reaching completion of our joint tasks. We also believe that the adoption of the new and pragmatic machinery will further support the implementation process. The EU and its Member States will aim at making these structures function well.

4. In its 2014 Council Conclusions on the Ottawa Convention, the EU reiterated its unwavering support to States Parties in their full and effective implementation of the Convention, and its commitment to promote universalisation of the Convention, to provide resources to fund mine action, and concrete and sustainable assistance to anti-personnel mine victims, their families and communities. In this context, the EU underlines the strong linkage with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which provides a wider framework to comprehensively address the needs of survivors of anti-personnel mine explosions, the realisation of their political as well as social and economic rights and to ensure respect for their inherent dignity.

5. In order to reach the Convention’s objectives, we should reinforce the Convention's historic culture of partnership and collaboration between States Parties, the United Nations, the AU and regional organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and relevant non-governmental organisations, in particular those benefiting from special partnership for the implementation of the Convention.

6. The European Union will continue to cooperate with and, where possible, extend assistance to those States Parties that most need support in meeting their commitments under the Convention, and to non-States Parties that significantly support mine action; this will continue to be carried out in
coordination with other donors, and in close cooperation with the countries concerned.

7. The EU concurs with the view that the Convention's shared goals can be advanced with enhanced ownership by States and by improved international cooperation between States seeking assistance and those that can provide it. In addition to cooperation with governments at national level, international cooperation is essential to the success of work on the ground.

8. Combined assistance by international actors can increase the impact of the different kinds of support that can be made available. We believe mine action should increasingly be integrated in the development agenda. It can promote integration of communities by making new economic means available, such as land or water which was previously inaccessible due to minefields. Mine action can also tackle humanitarian difficulties, such as restricted access for disabled people.

9. Taking into account that anti-personnel mine issues and mine action are often a cross-border problem, the EU considers that international and regional organisations may contribute together to facilitate mine action between neighbouring States. This cooperation may well be cost-effective.

10. In order to ensure adequate integration of mine action into bilateral cooperation, it is necessary that mine-affected countries prioritise or sufficiently take on board mine action in their requests for general assistance, and that they make it a priority in their national indicative programmes.

11. This approach requires an enhanced partnership with recipient countries, creating sustainable national capacities to effectively manage and execute mine action tasks. Therefore, we wish to use this opportunity to reach out to those in need and to point out that the EU stands ready to provide assistance to
States Parties in their efforts to enhance and implement effectively their national plans with a view to comply with the Convention as well as to ensure synergies under other international instruments pertinent in different countries. We are aware that full compliance with the obligations of the Ottawa Convention can be a significant challenge for affected States Parties.

12. We believe that it is through regular dialogue and synergies between donors, affected countries, researchers, victims and mine action organisations that constructive ideas can be developed and effective action can be carried out with the expediency and diligence required by these life- and limb-saving activities. We are convinced that this event today will also play an important role in this overall endeavour.