REMARKS BY

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AT THE MEETING OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

1 APRIL 2022
Your Excellency Willy Nyamitwe, Permanent Representative of Burundi and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of April;

Excellencies, Members of Council

Distinguished Representative of the United Nations Office

Distinguished Representative of the Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (CRC) to the African Union.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today’s session is very special in at least two ways: it is the first meeting of the newly elected Members of Council; and second, it is the first meeting Council is holding physically at the Commission following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Let me start by welcoming our new PSC Members. I also wish to congratulate our chairman for the month of April who is starting his tenure today. Ambassador Nyamitwe, Godspeed.

Chair of the month, I am grateful for this opportunity to brief Council on the topical subject of Mine Action. This is a subject that has for long been, and continues to be, an integral component of the African Peace and Security Architecture, and also contributes to peace and development.

Since 2015, 4th of April has been the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. It is intended to serve as a reminder of the danger this weapon that lies buried for years and decades after a war, poses.
AU Member States were actively involved in the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty in 1997. This was part of the global efforts to address the devastating effects of anti-personnel mines as an indiscriminate weapon.

Subsequent to the entry into force of this Treaty in March 1999, the First Meeting of States Parties also took place in Maputo, Mozambique, in May 1999. Thereafter the First Review Conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 29 November to 3 December 2004. This in recognition of the fact that Africa as a Continent was the most affected with landmines. In preparation for this Review Conference, Member States adopted a Common African Position on Anti-Personnel Landmines.

The Continent continues to make progress in clearing the contaminated areas. I am glad to note that presently, 28 out of the 29 Member States that had declared possessing stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines have since destroyed their stockpiles.

On the other hand, while at the entry into force of the Convention, 25 AU Member States had declared some of their territories as contaminated with landmines, today, only 14 have reported to have successfully cleared the contaminated areas. More recently, at the 4th Review Conference of the Convention that was held in Maputo, Mozambique, in 2014, these State Parties committed to clear the contaminated areas by the year 2025. This shows that the Continent still has work to do.
I, therefore, wish to seize this opportunity to request the Member States that have accomplished their clearance obligations to avail assistance – whether technical expertise or equipment – to support those that are yet to fulfil their clearance obligations. Indeed, this South-to-South cooperation is provided for in the Treaty. As a Commission, we commit to work with Partners to support such initiatives. This will contribute to enabling these Member States to meet their mine-clearance target of 2025.

We will also continue to support Member States to meet their obligations, such as conducting technical assessments that highlight country-specific challenges to mine clearance efforts.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

As you may have observed, new threats of explosives have emerged since the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty. The widespread use of improved Explosive Devices (IEDs) by none state actors is certainly cause for concern.

I wish to recall that, at its 1040th meeting held on 22nd October 2021, Council expressed concern over this growing threat and requested the Commission to assist Member States to develop and strengthen their counter-IED capacities.
The Commission is in the process of elaborating an AU Counter IED Strategy, as well as a Mine Action strategy. These drafts will be presented to Member States experts for consideration.

Let me conclude by highlighting that the global theme for this year is “Safe Ground, Safe Steps, Safe Home.” The campaign is to turn minefields into safe fields for production and leisure, restore confidence for those taking steps with fear of detonating an explosive, and the need to restore personal security for persons living in post-conflict settings.

This is a challenge, but with perseverance and strong resolve, the Continent will eradicate the threat posed by landmines. Let us join hands, together with partners, to make the threat of landmines a threat of the past.

I thank you all.