Excellencies, dear colleagues,

The active participation by States during the informal consultations on anti-vehicle mines throughout this year manifests the interest in and political relevance of the topic. The GICHD was particularly pleased to note that the evidence from the field on the humanitarian impact of AVMs has been widely recognised and valued.

Indeed, the GICHD, together with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), has been able to build a multi-year record of the significant humanitarian impact of AVM contamination. We documented more than 500 incidents related or suspected to be related to AVMs between 2015-2017, causing more than 1,500 casualties. Notably, a majority of them were civilians. AVM incidents are a global phenomenon that affected 33 States and territories during that period, ranging from contexts where conflict ended several decades ago to situations of current conflict.

In a case study on Mali, published last week only and available in the back of the room, we have observed that AVM casualties have been on the rise since 2016, with a spike in the first nine months of 2018. In particular, the number of civilian casualties has rapidly increased, while the AVM threat appears to have shifted from the northern part of the country to more populated areas of central Mali. Although being a tangible manifestation of AVM impact, casualties represent an incomplete picture thereof. Much less attention has been paid thus far to understand the wider humanitarian consequences of AVM contamination or its socio-economic impact.
In this context, we welcome a recent report by The HALO Trust that looks at the impact and national response to AVM contamination in Afghanistan. One of the key findings is precisely that qualitative and quantitative information about the impact of AVM contamination and clearance at the local socio-economic and macro-economic level remains limited in that country.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

The GICHD believes that further research is essential to inform discussions on MOTAPM. We would like to express our appreciation to the Government of Ireland for its support to the GICHD and SIPRI to pursue research on the topic in the year ahead.

At the same time, we also believe that operational improvements on the ground are equally key to addressing the issue. In response, the GICHD has supported Afghanistan since 2017 to establish a roadmap to deal with AVM contamination, which the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination – DMAC - currently estimates to represent half of the known legacy mine contamination.

We are thankful to all the UN and mine action programmes that have valuably contributed to our work on AVMs in previous years and will endeavour to further strengthen these partnerships in the future. The GICHD is committed to playing its parts in advancing the understanding of the issue at stake and in making the operational response more effective.

Thank you.