

# UN chief slams landmine threat days after US decision to supply Ukraine

AFP — The UN Secretary-General on Monday slammed the “renewed threat” of anti-personnel landmines, days after the United States said it would supply the weapons to Ukrainian forces battling Russia’s invasion.

In remarks sent to a conference in Cambodia to review progress on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, UN chief Antonio Guterres hailed the work of clearing and destroying landmines across the world.

“But the threat remains. This includes the renewed use of anti-personnel mines by some of the Parties to the Convention, as well as some Parties falling behind in their commitments to destroy these weapons,” he said in the statement.

He called on the 164 signatories — which include Ukraine but not Russia or the United States — to “meet their obligations and ensure compliance to the Convention”.

Guterres’ remarks were delivered by UN Under-Secretary General Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana.

AFP has contacted her office and a spokesman for Guterres to ask if the remarks were directed specifically at Ukraine.

The Ukrainian team at the conference did not respond to AFP questions about the US landmine supplies.

Washington’s announcement last week that it would send anti-personnel landmines to Kyiv was immediately criticised by human rights campaigners.

The outgoing US administration is aiming to give Ukraine an upper hand before President-elect Donald Trump enters office.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called the mines “very important” to halting Russian attacks.

The conference is being held in Cambodia, which was left one of the most heavily bombed and mined countries in the world after three decades of civil war from the 1960s.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet told the conference his country still needs to clear over 1,600 square kilometres (618 square miles) of contaminated land that is affecting the lives of more than one million people.

Around 20,000 people have been killed in Cambodia by landmines and unexploded ordnance since 1979, and twice as many have been injured.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) said on Wednesday that at least 5,757 people had been casualties of landmines and explosive remnants of war across the world last year, 1,983 of whom were killed.

Civilians made up 84 percent of all recorded casualties, it said.

AFP