

Statement on Universalization
23 June 2014

Thank you Mr. President

We have come a long way in universalizing the treaty and establishing a universal norm against antipersonnel landmines. One hundred and sixty-one countries are on board and landmines have been stigmatized all over the world. Countless lives have been saved. In many countries that used to be contaminated by landmines, farmers no longer have to fear to use their lands, children can walk freely to school, and refugees can return to their villages without stepping on landmines. Thanks to the Mine Ban Treaty and to all states that have joined it.

Five years ago in Cartagena, States Parties reaffirmed their commitment to universalize the treaty and strengthen its norms. Since the Cartagena Summit, five more nations, Finland, Poland, Somalia, South Sudan and Tuvalu, have ratified or acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty. And we are looking forward to see Oman officially acceding very soon if not this week.

This is slower progress than we would have liked to have seen over the last few years, however, we need to acknowledge that most states are already in the room, and we only have 36 countries left to help come through the door. We know those 36 countries will ban landmines; it is only a matter of time, it is inevitable. Most of the states not party have been engaged in the meetings of the treaty for many years; 17 of them attended the last Meeting of States Parties. And most of them have been voting in favor of the annual UN General Assembly Resolution calling for universalization of the treaty.

Indeed, many of the states not party have for many years expressed their interest in joining at some point – and here at the Third Review Conference, we can surely say that point in time should have come long ago. Here are a few examples, and we hope to hear updates from them this week on when they will join:

- The United States: 20 years ago the US called for the elimination of antipersonnel landmines but has not taken action to ban them. In 2009, the ICBL was encouraged when the US informed States Parties that it would review its policy on banning antipersonnel mines. But nearly five years have passed without a conclusion to the review. In 2012, a US representative informed States Parties a decision was expected to be announced "soon" but 18 months have been passed without announcement of any decision. We see no excuse for the US—which has not used antipersonnel mines in more than two decades-- to wait even longer, it is past time for the US to ban landmines and accede to the Mine Ban Treaty.
- Libya: Back in 2011, the ICBL was encouraged after receiving information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Libya that there was support for the Mine Ban Treaty. At that time, Libya was waiting for the new legislature to begin. That is happening now happened and Libya just recently signed the Arms Trade Treaty which indicates that the government can join international treaties.
- Nepal has given repeated statements of support for joining the Mine Ban Treaty, including by several Ministers for Peace & Reconstruction over the past years, and every major political party has pledged to support banning landmines as well as accession to the treaty. Nepal finished clearance of landmines already. So it is a mystery to us why Nepal has not taken the final step and joined the treaty.

- Sri Lanka has made statements on several occasions in support of joining the treaty. For example, in 2012 the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence reportedly said that the Defence Ministry was ready for Sri Lanka to sign the treaty. It is unclear to the ICBL why Sri Lanka has not yet made the decision to accede.
- Palestine has been expressing its intention to join the treaty since last year, and we were disappointed that it was not among the list of conventions that Palestine recently announced its intention to join.
- Lao PDR and Lebanon have expressed support for the principles of the treaty on many occasions, and they are among the leaders in banning cluster bombs. But they have not taken any serious steps toward joining the Mine Ban Treaty.
- Morocco has expressly stated that it is in de-facto compliance with most treaty obligations, so it should be a simple step for Morocco to accede.

Many of the other States not parties have been publicly supporting the objectives of the treaty, and some have said that they implement the treaty's key provisions. Other states have been taking practical steps including clearing landmines and providing assistance to landmine victims, and some have ceased production and adopted moratoria on transfers. However, only when all these states have acceded and implemented the treaty we can be assured of a mine free world.

The ICBL has issued a completion challenge to the mine ban community, which includes a call for no new use of antipersonnel mines by any actor, anywhere, within a decade. In other words, we need to see universal respect for the mine ban norm, and the best way to ensure the permanency of such respect is through universal adherence to the treaty.

In the meantime, we are sadly still seeing new use of antipersonnel mines, albeit on a limited scale, by states not party and non-state armed groups alike. Syria and Myanmar were both confirmed to be using landmines in 2012 and 2013. Non-state armed groups used antipersonnel mines in at least eight countries (Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia and Yemen). As well, with 32 of the 36 states not parties believed to have stockpiles of mines, and 12 states (China, Cuba, India, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, the US, and Vietnam) maintaining the capacity to produce, the risk of further use continues. We call on all these states to set a firm timeline for joining the Mine Ban Treaty, and to take meaningful interim steps in the meantime, including a moratorium on use and initiation of stockpile destruction.

The draft Maputo Action Plan provides a clear guidance for the States Parties to support universalization of the treaty and its norms. The four agreed upon actions on universalization of the treaty will make a huge difference if they are fully implemented. We challenge all States Parties to live up to their commitments outlined in the Maputo Action Plan to protect and promote the treaty and its widespread norms by constantly reaching out to and proactively engaging with states not party.

Thanks to Belgium the coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group, His Royal Highness Prince Mired, Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, Canada, France, Palau, and the ICRC for your work on universalization. However, the level of progress that is expected by the Maputo Action Plan over the next five years only can be achieved if all States Parties actively engage in the work of universalization of the treaty.

Universalization of the treaty remains a key objective for all of us and the ICBL is reaffirming its commitment to continue working together with all of you for full universalization of the treaty and its norms in coming years. Thanks.