

Press Release



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT LANDMINE USE IN LIBYA

Geneva, 17 June 2011 – The President of the international treaty banning anti-personnel mines has expressed “deep concern” about reports of new mine use in Libya. “New deployments of mines in Libya run counter to the norms that are accepted by the majority of States”, said Gazmend Turdiu, the senior Albanian diplomat who presides over the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, or Ottawa Convention.

“With few exceptions, the international community has accepted that the insidious, indiscriminate nature of anti-personnel mines means they must be eradicated”, said Gazmend Turdiu. “We should all be deeply concerned. The use of anti-personnel mines in Libya will have devastating effects on civilians, obstruct economic development and reconstruction and will inhibit the repatriation of internally displaced persons.”

Gazmend Turdiu’s comments came on the eve of the meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention’s Standing Committees. These meetings, which will take place from 20 to 24 June in Geneva, amount to the one of the largest annual gatherings of landmines experts and diplomats. Over 400 delegates representing more than 100 States and dozens of international and non-governmental organizations are expected to take part.

At the Convention’s upcoming meetings, Gazmend Turdiu is expected to remind the international community of commitments made during the landmark 2009 *Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World*: “At the *Cartagena Summit*, States accepted that they will condemn and continue to discourage in every possible way any production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines by any actors. Reports of new anti-personnel mine use in Libya are deeply disturbing. It is our responsibility to make our concern about this objectionable behaviour widely known.”

New use of anti-personnel mines in Libya was first reported in March and condemned by the Nobel Peace Prize-laureate International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Human Rights Watch has documented in detail mines used by Libyan government forces. In April, the Libyan National Transitional Council issued a written pledge not to use landmines.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

The AP Mine Ban Convention was adopted in Oslo in 1997 and was opened for signature in Ottawa the same year; it entered into force in 1999. To date 156 States are parties to the Convention, 152 of them now no longer hold stocks; almost 44 million mines have been destroyed by the States Parties.

34 of 50 States that at one time manufactured anti-personnel mines are now bound by the Convention’s ban on production. Most other parties have put in place moratoria on production and / or transfers of mines.

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Demining has resulted in millions of square metres of once dangerous land being released for normal human activity. 16 of 54 States Parties that originally reported mined areas have completed the task of clearing all such areas.

Libya is one of only four States in Africa that has not joined the Convention.

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For more information, interviews or information regarding the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or the meetings of the Convention's Standing Committees, please email: ISU@APMineBanConvention.org or contact Laila Rodriguez at +41 (0) 22 906 1679. For information on mine use in Libya which has been compiled by Human Rights Watch, visit: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/06/03/landmines-libya-technical-briefing-note>.