

ICBL Statement on Universalization
Intersessional Standing Committee on General Status and Operation
20 June 2011, Geneva, Switzerland



Thank you Mr. Co-Chair.

Over the past few months we have been very disturbed by news of mine use in Libya, where since March government forces have used antipersonnel mines in at least three locations. In addition, both government and rebel forces have used antivehicle mines, including some that may have had sensitive fuzes that cause them to function as antipersonnel mines.

The ICBL has publicly condemned this use and called on the Libyan government to immediately stop all use of antipersonnel mines, and to take urgent steps to ensure clearance of all laid mines and destruction of existing stockpiles to prevent further casualties. A few ICBL member organizations present in Libya, including Human Rights Watch and Handicap International, worked together with the rebel forces on a formal communiqué signed at the end of April, which commits the rebel forces not to use any landmines again, to destroy their stocks, as well as to clear all mines laid so far.

Further disturbing news over the past few months has been coming from alarming reports of the UN Mine Action Office in Sudan of possible use of antipersonnel and antivehicle mines by rebel groups in southern Sudan. We have been and will continue to follow closely this and other such allegations and we encourage all States Parties to stay vigilant.

We very much welcome the public statement by the President of the 10MSP on the mine use in Libya and we encourage all States Parties to follow this example and publicly condemn this and any new use of antipersonnel mines by anyone anywhere and to discourage any future use, as States Parties have committed under the Cartagena Action Plan. The Libya case shows that universalization efforts are not just about increasing the numbers of States Parties, more importantly, reducing the threat to innocent civilians in the 39 countries who are states not parties.

The ICBL still believes that universal adherence to the Treaty and its norm is fundamental to achieve a world free of mines. Thus the continuing standstill on universalization with no new states coming on board the Treaty since November 2007 is and should be serious concern and even more so a stimulus to action on this front.

Today we are encouraged to have heard from a number of states not party, including for the first time Tuvalu, that we have been engaging over the past years and months, and we hope that some of them will very soon be among States Parties.

We have continued to keep close focus on the ongoing US landmine policy review. To follow-up on our previous global action on the US from last year, on 1 March we launched another action, during which ICBL members, including survivors, in some 60 countries around the world contacted US embassies requesting meetings to hear updates on the policy review and urge that it conclude soon with a decision to join the Mine Ban Treaty. In the course of March and April close to 40 meetings with US representatives were held around the world, generating multiple reports by US embassies back to the Department of State.

Once again we would like to call on all States Parties to communicate with the US at the highest possible level about the importance, desirability, and feasibility of the US joining the Treaty. From our discussions with numerous US officials, we firmly believe that such engagement by a significant number of States Parties would make a huge difference.

ICBL members in states not party have continued to promote the treaty and accession by their governments. These include ongoing engagement of ICBL campaigners in Azerbaijan, Finland, Georgia, Israel, Nepal, Mongolia, Poland, and Sri Lanka, to name just a few. One of the highlights has been the recent launch of the ICBL's Halt Mine Use in Burma campaign website featuring the latest information on the mine situation in the country and statements of support of a mine ban from Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the former commander in chief of the armed forces of Myanmar.

Several ICBL members continued to engage with non-state armed groups, working toward a mine ban and support for humanitarian mine action in areas controlled or influenced by non-state armed groups. In addition to the no use pledge from Libya's Transitional National Council mentioned before, this resulted in destruction in February this year of over 1,500 antipersonnel landmines by the Polisario Front of Western Sahara, and another 380 antipersonnel mines by Puntland province of Somalia, both of which are signatories to Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment*.

In addition, the ICBL engaged again with the President of the European Parliament, who in his press release on the occasion of 4 April urged Finland and Poland to fulfill their pledge to join the treaty by 2012 in order to strengthen "Europe's credibility in the fight against antipersonnel mines." We look forward to the two last EU members joining the treaty by next year.

We also hope to make some headway with Lebanon who for the first time ever last December voted in favor of the UN General Assembly resolution on the Mine Ban Treaty and this September is hosting the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which is guided by the same humanitarian principles as the Mine Ban Treaty.

With the Mine Ban Treaty's 11th Meeting of States Parties taking place in Cambodia this year we want to push for concrete progress on universalization especially in Asia, where we see several candidates that could and should become a State Party by the time we meet again in Phnom Penh later this year. These include: Lao PDR, Cambodia's neighbor who has been a fearless leader on the Convention on Cluster Munitions; Nepal who has just completed clearance of its contamination; and Mongolia who has already committed on a number of occasions to join the treaty. We also call on other Asian states, some neighboring with the 11MSP host country – as Myanmar and Vietnam, and all other countries in Asia and elsewhere - to take bold steps to renounce mines and join the mine ban community at the 11MSP in Cambodia.

We urge all States Parties to push for progress on universalization in the coming months by seizing every opportunity to promote the Treaty and its norm.

The ICBL would also like to take this opportunity to call on all States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions that has been signed by 108 states and so far ratified by 57 states.

We would also like to remind delegates, on the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention and in recognition of the UN Day on Refugees, of the devastating effect landmines can have on those forced to leave homes because of conflicts and the threats they can pose for those trying to return home afterwards.

Last but certainly not least, we would like to thank Canada and John MacBride in particular, for the exceptional commitment and tireless efforts over the past decade in leading the work of the Universalization Contact Group. We will certainly miss your leadership but we hope you and Canada will stay fully committed to further universalization work. At the same time we welcome and look forward to working very closely with the incoming chair of the group – Belgium. We also

thank other States Parties that have been active on universalization and commend His Royal Highness Prince Mired of Jordan on his efforts to further universalize the Treaty.