



**Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-personnel
Mine Ban Convention**

Opening Statement

by Dr. Barbara Haering, President of the Council of Foundation,
Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

Phnom Penh, November 28, 2011

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

"A world free of mines!" – this is not only a dream, a vision or a goal, but the responsibility we share and the commitment we owe to the victims of this cruel weapon – as States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention, as international organisations, as NGOs, experts and first of all: as human beings. Returning to the region, where the movement against anti-personnel mines started two decades ago, we are aware of our common roots, we recognize the achievements of the last years and we confirm our dedication to humanitarian demining.

Ce retour aux sources de la Convention nous sert d'opportunité unique de nous rendre compte des progrès réalisés depuis lors, mais encore davantage de prendre un nouveau souffle face aux importants défis qui demeurent et qui continuent à exiger une réponse concertée des Etats parties, organisations internationales, ONG et opérateurs, tous animés par ceux qui souffrent le plus de cette arme indiscriminée: les hommes, femmes et enfants victimes des mines antipersonnel.

It is indeed encouraging to see that this year again several States Parties were able to complete their mine clearance obligations and to declare themselves mine-free. Their citizens can now put their fear aside and develop their villages and their



countries in a sustainable way. These achievements are encouraging for States Parties which are still on their way to become mine-free. However, it is alarming to hear that at the same time new mines have been laid in several conflict zones. There are places where the threat is even bigger than some years ago. This is not acceptable. "Never Again" , as Song Kosal urged us yesterday.

The Cartagena Action Plan draws our attention to the fact that landmine and ERW contamination impede not only sustainable developments on local, regional or national level but also the achievement of the overall Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations. On the other hand, let me underline the important contribution of humanitarian demining to armed violence reduction and post-conflict recovery in general. In recent years, mine action organisations have increasingly been supporting wider armed violence reduction initiatives. They include activities in support of stockpile management, of small arms and light weapons control and reduction programs as well as community safety. The Afghan Community Based Demining programme, for example, trains and employs former combatants as deminers in their own communities. Thus, contributing to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Afghanistan. Albania is an other example, where national mine action experience and expertise support the Government in clearing abandoned explosive ordnance hotspots and obsolete ammunition stockpiles.

These examples show how closely linked mine action, security and peace are, but also to what extent the integration of mine action in a broader human security approach is crucial for the sustainable success of mine action itself. Mine action therefore must be an integral part of development strategies at national and international levels.



An effective and efficient use of resources is of primary importance for demining programs, for national and international authorities as well as for donors. This is the case not only in times of financial constraints, but in order to maximize our impact in the field. Implementation of efficient land release and effective priority-setting, therefore, must be accelerated and best practice and lessons learned shared and disseminated. Our field visit yesterday showed not only the urgency of land release concepts but also the success of their systematic and thorough implementation.

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining remains committed to support all actors involved in mine action in their efforts to achieve the goals set by the Convention and by other instruments of humanitarian disarmament. Our strategy for the years 2012/14 has been discussed during the last months with our stakeholders. While taking into consideration changing parameters of the context we work in, the strategy confirms the core mission of the centre and sets clear priorities for the next three years. The Council of Foundation will decide this strategy two weeks from now.

Bridging the gap between research, lessons learned and practice, the Centre will continue to promote evidence-based policies, to develop standards and to enhance performance and professionalism – thus, making Mine Action faster, cheaper, safer, more effective and sustainable.

And in this spirit, I wish you every success for this week!

Thank you, Mister President.