



General Exchange of Views

11th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
29 November 2011

Thank you, Mr. President,

We are honored to be here in your beautiful country. This meeting is especially meaningful for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, as Cambodia is indeed in many ways the cradle of the ban movement that became the ICBL, and we are also about to mark the 20th year since the founding of the ICBL.

Mr. President, we look forward to working with you throughout the year, and we thank the 10MSP President for his commitment and role in advancing the work of the Mine Ban Treaty, and for expressing concerns about new mine use instances this year.

No one can question that the Mine Ban Treaty continues to make a real difference on the ground. The latest Landmine Monitor report, released last week, shows that mine action funding is at an all time high, and for two years in a row, we have achieved a record level of land cleared. New casualties continue to be at a far lower rate than in earlier years.

We are also very happy to welcome Tuvalu and South Sudan to the mine ban community. This breaks a long period of stagnation on the universalization front. We were very happy to hear Finland's, announcement yesterday, and we are pleased that Finland and Poland are moving forward with their pledge to join next year. With each state that joins the Mine Ban Treaty, the global norm rejecting antipersonnel mines is reinforced.

However, the ICBL is very concerned that there were at least three cases of new use of antipersonnel mines by states during 2011, by Israel, the forces of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and Myanmar. It also appears likely that Syrian forces laid mines on the border with Lebanon.

Landmine Monitor reported that non-state armed groups used antipersonnel mines in as few as four countries in the past year—the smallest number ever.

New use of antipersonnel mines is still rare and limited in scope, but any use deserves widespread condemnation.

It is vital that Meetings of States Parties remain a forum to acknowledge and discuss the challenges faced by the treaty. There are serious compliance issues to deal with involving a number of States Parties, and others are not doing nearly enough to implement its provisions and their commitments made under the Cartagena Action Plan.

One affected State Party, the Republic of Congo, is currently in violation of the treaty for failing to meet its clearance deadline on 1 November 2011, without submitting an extension request. It is deeply regrettable that Congo, over the course of ten years, was not able to confirm the extent of its

antipersonnel mine contamination, let alone to start clearance. This violation could easily have been avoided, at the very minimum through the submission of an extension request last year.

States Parties should not lose sight of the fact that in Turkey, the very serious allegations of use by one or more members of the armed forces dating back to 2009 are still unresolved. Turkey has pledged to keep States Parties informed about the situation, but little information has been forthcoming.

Four States Parties are also still in violation of their stockpile destruction deadline: Belarus, Greece, and Turkey since 2008 and Ukraine since 2010. While we take note of all the efforts they are making to carry forward their stockpile destruction, we are especially worried that such long periods of non-compliance are not meeting much concern from most other States Parties. All States Parties should feel a sense of responsibility to resolve these situations, especially in the case of Belarus and Ukraine that made it clear from the start that international support would be essential to help them fulfill their obligation. At the June intersessional Standing Committee meetings, Turkey indicated that stockpile destruction would be completed by 31 August this year, but we have had no update, despite repeated requests. Greece's long delays are perhaps the hardest to understand and accept.

Also very disturbing is the fact that by the end of the week, 27 States Parties will have asked for extensions to their clearance deadlines. While some requests were to be expected and are justified, clearly many of these states should have been able to finish within 10 years. Alarming, only a handful of them now seem to be on track to meeting their revised deadlines. The ICBL has put forward comments on the four requests that have been officially submitted, and on the Republic of Congo's request that has been submitted informally. They are available outside this room on the ICBL table. All States Parties should engage in the review and decision-making on these requests.

In addition we are faced this year with the new situation of states that discover landmine contamination after their clearance deadline has passed. This situation is not foreseen by the treaty and we hope all States Parties will work to develop an agreed approach to this situation.

Victim assistance in 2010-2011 benefitted from a reoriented focus on service accessibility and availability. However, these improvements were at least in part offset by increases in armed violence that eroded the accessibility and availability of services in several states with significant numbers of survivors. And a meager 9% of mine action funding is dedicated to victim assistance. While some progress is being made, there is a long way to go until all victims see their rights respected and their needs met. The ICBL will offer concrete advice this week through our active participation in the Victim Assistance Parallel Programme.

We remain concerned about the large number of states that are retaining antipersonnel mines without any indication that they are using them for the permitted purposes, but instead the mines simply sit in stocks. In our view, we have already passed the point where this should be seen as a compliance issue, not just a reporting issue.

And regrettably, transparency reporting has hit an all-time low, with only 52% of States Parties submitting a transparency report covering year 2010. If you are among the remaining 48%, we would like to remind you that transparency reporting is a treaty obligation and a crucial way to keep track of progress made towards the full implementation of the treaty.

I would like to conclude by highlighting a few findings of Landmine Monitor 2011. A briefing presenting the findings will be held today during lunch break.

There were 4,191 recorded mine and explosive remnants of war casualties in 2010, a 5% increase from the previous year. However, casualty data remains poor and incomplete in some countries, so the true figure is certainly higher.

At least 200km² of land was cleared of landmines during 2010—the highest annual total ever recorded by the Monitor. Seventy-two states and seven disputed areas were confirmed or suspected to be mine-affected.

Funding for mine action reached an all-time high in 2010, with 637 million US dollars being contributed to projects around the world.

Mr. President, this treaty is characterized by partnership, cooperation, personal commitment, and frank exchanges that may be surprising for newcomers. Yet, those characteristics have proven to be absolutely essential for the achievement of our collective goal.

It is clear that tremendous strides continue to be made in our common effort to combat antipersonnel mines and their lasting effects, despite the daunting challenges we now face in some areas of implementation of and compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty. But sustained and even increased efforts will be required from all of us in order to meet the goal we have set for ourselves: to end the suffering caused by landmines and to achieve a world free of landmines, in our lifetime.

Thank you.