

**12th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
ICBL Statement during General Exchange of Views
3 December 2012**



Thank you, Mr. President.

We would like to begin by thanking Cambodia and in particular the 11MSP President for his commitment to eradicating antipersonnel mines, for his effective role in advancing the work of the Mine Ban Treaty, and for hosting us last year in his beautiful and inspiring country. We look forward to carrying on our close partnership with Slovenia as President of the 12MSP.

Fifteen years after the Mine Ban Treaty was adopted and signed, it remains the great success story of humanitarian disarmament, having a real, lasting impact on the ground, every day in dozens of countries. As reported by the recently released Landmine Monitor 2012 report, only one government laid new antipersonnel mines in 2012 (Syria), mined areas continue to be cleared at a solid pace, funding for mine action is at its highest level, and the annual casualty rate has held steady in recent years, at a level far, far below that of 15 years ago.

In other positive developments, we warmly welcome new States Parties Finland and Somalia to the mine ban community this year. We are also very pleased to hear Poland's announcement of imminent ratification, and as a Polish citizen, I am especially thrilled that it will become a State Party very soon. With each state that joins the Mine Ban Treaty, the global norm rejecting antipersonnel mines is reinforced.

These achievements have happened in large part because of the commitment of the governments, NGOs, and international organizations in this room, and the cooperative partnership we have forged and nurtured over the years. At the same time, we all realize that there are still major challenges needing our attention, and the future credibility and effectiveness of the treaty is closely linked to how we collectively face those issues.

Most disturbingly, we have a record number of serious allegations of antipersonnel mine use by the armed forces of States Parties: Sudan and Yemen this year, plus the ongoing investigations and legal proceedings in Turkey.

There have been repeated reports in 2011 and 2012 of new mine use in Sudan by both government and rebel forces. Based on concerns expressed by UN personnel, and information gathered on the ground, including photographs, the allegations are serious and merit careful investigation. At the May intersessional meetings, Sudan indicated that it would indeed conduct an investigation. We hope to hear a report from Sudan on their findings this week.

In Yemen, antipersonnel mines laid at the Ministry of Industry building in Sana'a caused at least one civilian casualty in 2012, and video evidence of clearance at the building demonstrated the mines were newly laid. It cannot be conclusively determined what forces laid the mines, but some evidence points to government forces. Yemen has not responded to ICBL letters and inquiries about this incident, and we hope Yemen will speak on the issue this week.

In addition, States Parties should not lose sight of two separate instances of allegations of antipersonnel mine use by members of the Turkish Armed Forces in 2009. Both of these allegations are apparently the subject of ongoing investigations, with legal proceedings on one of them going on since 2010. Turkey has pledged to keep States Parties informed about the situation, but little information has been forthcoming.

There are also ongoing concerns about reports of mine use in South Sudan and Cambodia.

How States Parties handle these most serious of possible breaches of the treaty will be a clear indicator of their commitment to preserving the treaty's strength and integrity.

We are also disturbed by new mine use by states not party – Syria this year and Syria, Myanmar, Israel, and Gaddafi's Libya last year, as well as non-state armed groups in as many as six countries according to *Landmine Monitor 2012*. At the same time, we are encouraged by Myanmar's statement in July 2012 that it will no longer use antipersonnel mines and is considering accession to the Mine Ban Treaty. Indeed, the best way to prevent future use is for all remaining countries to join the treaty.

Though new mine use remains rare and limited, any and all use deserves strong, vocal condemnation by States Parties and others in the international community.

Mr. President, one of the treaty's greatest successes has been the destruction of over 46 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines. Yet, this is also the area where we have the treaty's longest cases of non-compliance. Three States Parties are still in violation of the treaty for missing their stockpile destruction deadline: Belarus and Greece since March 2008 and Ukraine since June 2010. We take note of all their efforts to make progress on stockpile destruction, and we know each country is struggling with unique challenges, most of all financial. But we are especially worried about the long period of time they have been in non-compliance, the fact that none of them are actively destroying stocks at this time [[CHECK STILL TRUE]], and that none of them has an expected completion date. We again call on all parties that can or are currently supporting these states to work with them on the most efficient route to completing destruction.

We also remain concerned about the large number of states that are retaining antipersonnel mines without any indication that they are using them for training and research purposes, but instead the mines simply sit in stocks. It has reached the stage where this should be seen as a compliance issue, not just a reporting issue.

On clearance, we should all take satisfaction in the fact that at least 190km² of land was cleared of landmines during 2011, with additional land being released through survey. This is a significant amount of land that is being returned to productive use. But States Parties can and must do even better. Thirty States Parties have requested extensions to their clearance deadlines, including three new states this year. And we see no signs that the high rate of states needing extensions will slow down in the coming years. While some extension 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 now seem to be on track to meet their revised deadlines. We need these States Parties to act with greater urgency and to put a higher priority

on complying with this treaty obligation. In many cases, lives and limbs are at stake.

All States Parties should engage in the review and decision-making on extension requests. The ICBL comments on the four requests that are being considered this week are available outside this room on the ICBL table. We also strongly support the proposed changes to the extension request review process, which should put states in a better position to monitor progress once extensions are granted.

In addition, we now need to address a situation not foreseen by the treaty – what happens when states discover landmine contamination after their clearance deadline has passed. As is usual with this convention, States Parties are showing flexibility in designing an approach to this unfortunate situation, and we hope the decision will be adopted this week.

Mr. President, we are all here today because of the ongoing damage antipersonnel mines are still doing to communities, families, and individuals. A total of 4,286 new casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war were recorded in 2011. This means approximately 12 casualties per day, a similar rate as the last two years. Though data remains incomplete, this constitutes an estimated 70% drop in casualties from 15 years ago, showing the strength of the treaty's preventative provisions. Steady decreases in annual casualty rates continued in some of the most mine-affected states, such as Afghanistan and Cambodia, but these were offset by increases in countries with new or intensified conflicts, such as Libya, Pakistan, Sudan, South Sudan, and Syria.

Of course, the number of survivors in need of victim assistance continues to grow every year. In this regard, the *Landmine Monitor* found that in 2011, most States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty with significant numbers of survivors strengthened national ownership for victim assistance through better coordination, planning, and understanding survivors' needs and challenges. They made less progress in mobilizing and dedicating national resources for these needs.

There is an urgent need to improve access to and quality of assistance, key for making a real impact on the lives of survivors. We are alarmed by *Landmine Monitor 2012's* finding that setbacks in the availability and accessibility of assistance and services for survivors occurred in at least 12 countries in 2011, most as a result of declining international assistance and new or intensified conflicts. Direct international support for victim assistance programs through international mine action funding declined by almost 30% from 2010. Support for landmine victims can come through such earmarked funds or broader development budgets, for which information is harder to gather. But until it arrives in sufficient quantity, landmine victims will not be able to enjoy the same rights and economic opportunities as their fellow citizens.

On the other hand, we are pleased to see continuing high levels of funding for other areas of mine action – reaching an all-time high of \$662 million in national and international allocations in 2011. However ensuring funds are used in an effective and efficient manner is as important as sustaining the level of funding.

Effectively addressing the issues we have just raised depends on getting high quality information from States Parties, including through their annual Article 7 reports. Regrettably, transparency reporting remains at a low 55% for reports due this year. If you are among the

remaining 45%, 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.

In closing, Mr. President, we can see that many states are taking great strides towards fulfilling their treaty obligations. With less than two years before the next Review Conference, we urge all states to enhance these efforts – by finding ways to be more efficient, by increasing national prioritization of the mine issue, or by forging closer international partnerships. To put it simply, the ICBL is calling on you all to act today for a mine-free tomorrow.

Thank you.