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**12TH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION
3-7 DECEMBER 2012**

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

**STATEMENT BY DELL HIGGIE
AMBASSADOR FOR DISARMAMENT**

3 DECEMBER 2012

It is a pleasure to see you in the chair, Mr President, and you can be assured of New Zealand's full support as you guide us in our work for this meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to express New Zealand's gratitude to outgoing President H.E Prak Sokhonn of Cambodia for the excellent manner in which he has steered the work of the Convention since last year's Meeting of States Parties in Phnom Penh.

We join with others in recognising the enduring and positive impact the Convention has had since it opened for signature in 1997. New Zealand remains steadfast in its commitment to mine action and we are pleased to support a range of projects in many countries related to mine clearance, risk education and victim assistance.

Excellent progress has been made in terms of universalisation and we welcome new States Parties Finland, Somalia and Tuvalu, our Pacific neighbour. We continue to call on those remaining States outside the Convention to change tack and to join the AP Mine Ban community without any further delay.

It is pleasing that production of anti-personnel mines has all but ceased and more and more countries are meeting their clearance obligations. We congratulate those countries who have recently achieved 'mine-free' status and look forward to further positive announcements in the coming days.

It is also noteworthy that the numbers of landmine victims continues to fall and we recognise the greater emphasis placed on supporting social and economic integration of landmine survivors in recent years.

As a result of this progress, we are able to say with confidence that the physical circumstances and practical realities of a mine-free world have come, in large measure, to match the legal and humanitarian reality of their prohibition under the Convention.

It is therefore deeply troubling when there are reports of landmines being used - be it by States Parties or non-State Parties - as we have seen recently. Given their invasive and long-lasting legacy, particularly on civilian communities, New Zealand condemns any use of anti-personnel landmines and calls on all parties to desist from such actions.

I would like to pay tribute to the tireless work undertaken by civil society to promote the Convention and to ensure that we, the States Parties, remain true to our commitment to achieve a mine-free world. We congratulate the ICBL for their 20th anniversary this year and for their pioneering approach which has served as such an apposite model for addressing other areas of humanitarian disarmament concern.

On this International Day for Persons with Disabilities, it is fitting that we recognise the integral role that survivors of landmines have played in the work of this Convention. Their activism and unwavering commitment are fundamental to our ongoing efforts to realise the Convention's objectives of a mine-free world. Through sharing their personal experiences they quite rightly remind us that while significant progress has been made, our work is not yet done.

We must remain steadfast in our commitment to guard against the creation of any new landmine victims and to ensure that survivors of landmines, like all people with disabilities, are supported to ensure their full and effective participation in all aspects of their communities.