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APLC- 12th Meeting of the States Parties

Universalizing the Convention

Statement of Belgium - Universalization Contact Group Coordinator-

Agenda Item 10.d

Mr President,

The universalization of the Convention of Ottawa remains a challenge. This year however, we've had very encouraging news as three more countries have acceded to the Convention in 2012.

We'd like to congratulate Finland, Somalia and now Poland for that excellent decision.

We are especially satisfied that there is now universal acceptance of the Convention by all the Member States of the European Union. This reinforces the legitimacy of the mine action of the EU and fully synchronizes the political commitment of the EU to the Ottawa Convention with the available EU financial instruments.

We would also like to highlight and welcome the fact that all States in Sub-Saharan Africa are now states parties to the Convention.

We believe that these positive developments will give a new momentum to the promotion of our Convention and we are confident that the family of States Parties can continue to grow between now and the Third Review Conference if we maintain our efforts to persuade the countries who still have not joined the Convention.

If the Ottawa convention is frequently referred to as a pivotal universal standard in international humanitarian law, we're still convinced that accession to a legally binding instrument is indispensable to achieve the objective of a world free of mines.

The provisions of the Cartagena Summit are clear and the States Parties have to pursue their efforts to engage States not parties to the Convention.

In this regard we are grateful that, through the adoption of a European Union Council Decision in support of the Convention, funds are being provided to support a high level panel on universalization, thus expanding the important efforts undertaken by Prince Mired of Jordan in recent years.

We know as well from the Cartagena Summit that more intensive efforts are needed, with new tools, to overcome outdated thinking about the utility of anti-personnel mines.

In this regard, it is very useful that the European Union Council Decision will support the commissioning of a study on border security without anti-personnel mines as well as workshops to circulate the findings of this study.

While we are grateful for these initiatives, we should recall that universalization is also the business of all States Parties.

Our hope is that, during the period leading up to the Third Review Conference, more States Parties will become actively involved in universalization efforts.

Yesterday, the Universalization Contact Group met and discussed a priority list of States not yet part to the Convention that deserve our attention in the coming months.

We are hopeful that if we focus our attention, join our efforts and if more actors are involved, the number of States Parties will continue to grow.

Mr President,

Let me conclude by thanking in particular the ICBL and its member organizations for persistently calling for universal acceptance of the Convention.

While we as States Parties have committed in the Cartagena Action Plan to pursue universalization, we must not forget how our efforts are strengthened by working in close partnership with our NGO colleagues.