

12th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
ICBL Statement on Universalization
6 December 2012



Thank you Mr. President.

We would like to start by welcoming Finland and Somalia among the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, bringing us to an impressive 160 States Parties. We are also very happy that this number will soon grow again with Poland's upcoming ratification. Once Poland ratifies, this means that all of the European Union and all of NATO - with the exception of the US - are part of the Mine Ban Treaty. This should be yet another incentive for those still outside the treaty to join without further delay.

Unfortunately, we continue to see mine use since the 11MSP. Syria has been using antipersonnel mines, notably on its borders with Lebanon and Turkey. Use by non-state armed groups was up slightly in the past year - taking place in six countries. Any user of antipersonnel mines is knowingly putting civilians' lives at risk, and we strongly condemn their acts. We call on all states to echo this condemnation and we thank those that have already done so. States should also discourage any future use, as they have committed to do under the Cartagena Action Plan.

Every case of new mine use confirms the urgency to universalize the treaty. Our goal is not just to increase the number of States Parties, but more importantly, to prevent further casualties. We are happy to have heard about progress towards joining the treaty from several states not party this week and we look forward to the day when they will join our ban community.

The ICBL, together with the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines, welcomes the US's continued participation in the Mine Ban Treaty's Meetings of States Parties. We understand that the US landmine policy review initiated in 2009 has largely been concluded, but we continue to wait to hear about the outcome.

Since the policy review began, the U.S. administration has received letters of support for the Mine Ban Treaty from 68 Senators, over 100 NGO leaders, key NATO allies, 16 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, victims of U.S. landmines, and countless concerned individuals from around the world. With the election over, we encourage the Obama Administration to wait no longer to join the treaty. President Clinton had envisioned that this would happen by 2006, but we are still waiting. All States Parties should be giving this message to the US at the highest levels possible, reminding them that a world without landmines is in the best interests of both the United States and its allies.

We are also pleased to see Myanmar attending the 12MSP. We welcome the statement of Myanmar's Minister of Foreign Affairs in July 2012 that the government is no longer using antipersonnel landmines and is considering joining the treaty. In February and November 2012, ICBL members conducted missions to Myanmar, during which they discussed mine contamination and the prospect of joining the treaty with several political parties, human rights institutions, peace negotiators and other relevant actors. We are heartened that the landmine issue

has been on the agenda of talks between the Government and several non-state armed groups. Most substantively it has been reported that the Government and the Karen National Union have agreed in principle to the non-use of landmines in areas covered by the ceasefire and to cooperate in the clearance of landmines. We look forward to engaging more with Myanmar's authorities on moving towards joining the ban, clearing mined areas and assisting its victims. We will be watching closely to see how Myanmar's announcements translate into actions. We also take note of Myanmar's recent accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which should result in concrete measures to assist its many victims of antipersonnel mines.

The ICBL is very pleased to see the delegation from Palestine and we congratulate the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the submission of their voluntary article 7 report and for launching of its mine action program. We understand that with its new status at the UN, Palestine is eligible to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty, and we urge it to do so as quickly as possible.

Recently we have been also encouraged by Oman's renewed interest in the treaty. Earlier this year, the ICBL Diplomatic Advisor visited Oman to encourage accession to the treaty, which was followed by the visit of an Omani delegation to Geneva this September to discuss issues related to the treaty. We hope this initiative will soon be followed by positive news on accession.

We are more and more disturbed by, and fail to understand, the lack of visible progress towards accession by a number of states which we believe are in a position to join the treaty soon. These include: Lao PDR and Lebanon, who have showed leadership on the Convention on Cluster Munitions; Nepal, which has completed clearance of its mine contamination; as well as Mongolia and Tonga, which have already committed on a number of occasions to join the treaty. We will continue knocking on the door of these and other states not party.

In addition to getting the remaining states not party to join the treaty, universalization of the ban also means getting all actors – state or non-state – to stop using mines. Therefore, activities to engage non-state armed groups in a ban on antipersonnel mines and advocacy on mine action should remain a priority for the mine ban community. States Parties should facilitate this process, by providing access for engagement and monitoring by civil society, and humanitarian mine action by appropriate entities.

We welcome the signing of the Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment* by the Justice and Equality Movement of Sudan, as well as the incorporation and dissemination of the *Deed of Commitment* obligations into the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's internal code of conduct.

The ICBL and its members around the world will continue working together with states not party, the ICRC, UN agencies and States Parties to further universalize the treaty and with non-state armed groups to further universalize the norm. There are real opportunities on the horizon for enlarging the treaty's membership. We call on all of you to grasp these opportunities and act today to bring more countries on board.

In closing, we would like to thank all that have been active on universalization, including the President of the 11th Meeting of States Parties. Thank you.