

OPENING CEREMONY

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Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Mr. President, distinguished guests,

On behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, I thank Belgium for its commitment and engagement during its Presidency. I would like to make a special mention of Belgium's initiative to support the participation of four survivor leaders this week; I look forward to hearing from them during the High Level session on Victim Assistance.

Parabéns a Moçambique para concluir com êxito a limpeza e eliminação das áreas afetadas por minas antipessoal. Congratulations to Mozambique for having the determination and persistence to successfully complete the clearance of all antipersonnel landmines; to the Director of Mozambique's National Institute for Demining, and to his team for their vision and leadership; and to all who supported the process. We trust that this type of partnership will also prevail in addressing the lifelong needs of survivors and their families. Mozambique's completion, and that of 27 other States Parties who have also completed clearance, are victories for the Mine Ban Treaty and the whole mine action community since it shows that a mine-free world is possible.

It has been 16 years since the Mine Ban Treaty entered into force. The global norm against the use of landmines is strong with 80% of the world's countries on board the treaty and most others complying with its important provisions. The annual casualty total in 2014 of 3,678 people was the second lowest annual total since the Landmine Monitor started recording casualties in 1999. But our continued vigilance and action is required to defend this norm and prevent further casualties. Since the 3rd Review Conference, antipersonnel landmines have been used by three states not party- Myanmar, North Korea, and Syria. Use by non-state armed groups was identified in 10 countries- the highest number since 2006. This use must be condemned vociferously by all.

Progress has also been made on the implementation of the treaty, preventing future victims by destroying stockpiled landmines and clearing emplaced landmines that pose daily threats in all regions of the world. States Parties have destroyed more than 49 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines, and the amount of land cleared in 2014 totaled at least 200 square kilometers, an increase from 2013. The example of Mozambique adds credence to the message of last year's 3rd Review Conference: We can complete clearance by 2025 if we remain committed to the task— this is a task that we, the mine action community, know how to complete and our collective commitment will ensure that we get it done efficiently and effectively.

In many countries efforts have also been made to improve access to the services that landmine victims need and to create opportunities for their participation in their communities and in fora where decisions are made that affect their lives. Yet, the participation of survivors and their capacity to demand their rights must be strengthened to ensure that progress towards full access to all needed services continues until all needs are met and rights are upheld- for the life of all victims. This is the commitment that all States Parties have made-- we all have a role to play to make sure the promise to victims is realized.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines calls on all states gathered here this week to make the best use of the opportunity that this annual meeting provides. Protect the norm by speaking out against any use, by states or non-state armed groups. Promote the effective implementation of the treaty by engaging in dialogue and decisions on issues of clearance, including extension requests, and victim assistance. Commit to work together to complete the task we have before us.

Thank you.