



BELGIUM

**18th Meeting of the States Parties
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention - November 2020**

Universalization

We are concerned about the continuing high numbers of casualties by anti-personnel mines over the past five years. Most of them are civilians and among them children are disproportionately hard hit. The human toll and suffering caused by land mines remain a hard reality.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has become a cornerstone of humanitarian disarmament. Unfortunately, there have been no new accessions over the past two years. We need to step up our work and keep universalization high on our agenda. As States Parties, we have the collective responsibility to promote accession to the Convention in our political dialogue with States not yet party. The assistance of the Implementation Support Unit is a valuable asset in this regard, *inter alia* by keeping track of the positions regarding accession of States not yet party. Let me also express our appreciation for the tireless efforts of Special Envoy Prince Mired of Jordan.

Before travel restrictions were imposed due to the Covid-crisis, Princess Astrid of Belgium had the opportunity to visit Nepal. During her meetings with the president, the minister of foreign affairs and the minister of defense Princess Astrid raised the issue of landmines and pleaded for Nepal's accession to the Convention. The Nepalese authorities underscored the fact the country is decontaminated and that it is *de facto* implementing most of the Convention's obligations. This high level contact would benefit from further follow up and outreach, as is the case for a number of other States, as far as present working conditions permit.

Belgium regrets the change of course in the US anti-personnel landmine policy announced earlier this year and the decision to re-authorize the use of anti-personnel mines also outside of the Korean Peninsula. This decision is at odds with the global norm that has saved tens of thousands of lives and limbs in the past twenty years. The use of anti-personnel mines, whether manufactured or improvised, by whomever or wherever, remains unacceptable.