

STATEMENT TO THE OPENING SESSION OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE MINE BAN TREATY

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Excellencies and friends, many of us come here directly from Oslo, Norway, where representatives of the ICBL, ICRC, UN and governments came together to mark the fifth anniversary of the September 1997 Oslo negotiations that resulted in the Mine Ban Treaty. While we did take a moment to consider that success and the great progress to date of the ban movement, more important was the critical assessment of the way forward to reach our goals of the total elimination of landmines and support for the still-increasing number of landmine survivors.

In reflecting on the success of the Ottawa-Oslo Mine Ban Process, it is widely recognized that much of our success was – and continues to be--the result of the partnership between civil society and governments. While it is wonderful to bask in the success resulting from that model, it is impossible not to wonder about it in the current context of a world which seems to be relentlessly driven to war. It is impossible not to wonder at the durability of our model in a world where, as a diplomatic colleague in Oslo just said over the weekend, “multilateralism is an endangered species.”

The world seems to be at a crossroads and the urgent question is whether military dominance will determine global security in a world potentially seriously destabilized by a radical new military doctrine, or whether those who believe in a different world order in which global security is based on human security and not unilateral military might will stand up unflinchingly and be heard.

The Ottawa-Oslo Mine Ban Process is – along with the current impressive example of the International Criminal Court – a clear example of a human security-centered, multilateral approach to international law. The landmine movement helped develop a different model of diplomacy in which public proclamations closely mirrored what actually resulted from treaty negotiations.

All too often in traditional geopolitics, it is acceptable practice to make proclamations to appease the public conscience or to win votes at home, knowing full well that “pragmatic realities” will result in very different agreements between governments behind closed doors. Unfortunately, even in the face of the surprisingly rapid success of the ICC against tremendous odds, we have seen the realities of such geopolitics in action where some governments have made moving public pronouncements in support of the treaty, only then to make bilateral agreements which will, in effect, create one system of law for 193 countries of the world, while exempting the most powerful state.

Today, we are here to mark the opening of the annual week-long meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. We are here to reaffirm our commitment to the goals

of a mine free world – and, it is my supreme hope, to also reaffirm our commitment to a different model of diplomacy based on partnerships between governments and the civil society they are presumed to represent – a model in which the demands of civil society are reflected in the actions taken by the governments that represent them.

We are here at the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to assess our progress, but also to critically examine the challenges that remain to meeting our goals as critical dates outlined in the Mine Ban Treaty rapidly approach – the initial 2003 deadlines for stockpile destruction, the Review Conference of 2004, as well as the other important date of 2009, which is the initial deadline for mine clearance. I hope we are here to find meaningful ways to openly and honestly address ongoing concerns related to some ambiguities in the interpretation of the Mine Ban Treaty. I will not go over them here, as they are more than adequately covered in the official statement of the ICBL, which will be given by Mr. Steve Goose, the head of our delegation.

I hope we are here also to consider some of the critical questions on mine action and survivor assistance that were raised over this past weekend in Oslo. For those of you who were not able to be there, I strongly urge you to look at the questions and recommendations arising from those days of discussion. Those I found to be particularly insightful were those of Mr. Bob Eaton, of the Survey Action Group – who is here with us in Geneva; as well as critical questions raised by Mr. Rae McGrath, who many of you know and who has a long history of critical questioning of the ban movement and of mine action.

For me, the central question regarding mine action was how do we maximize resources to address the highest priority areas in the most seriously mine affected countries in order to reach mine clearance deadlines, but also to put international mine action programs on a path to self-elimination. Mine action should be recognized as a means to an end, not an end in itself. In Oslo, both NGO and UN mine action agencies were challenged to critically assess what they do in that light. Admittedly, these are difficult questions, but they are questions that must be addressed.

Also, another central question was that of what the international community is doing to really meet the long-term needs of landmine survivors. While I think we are all justified in seeing success in our work to eliminate landmines in the fact that each year the number of new landmine survivors seems to be on a decline – the other side of the equation is that the absolute number of mine survivors still continues to grow.

Please stop and think about this for a minute. While the annual rate might be diminishing, the absolute number of landmine survivors continues to grow each year. Until we have eliminated landmines from stockpiles and from the ground, each and every year there will continue to be more landmine survivors. More people in dozens of countries around the world who will continue to need our help to have a chance to lead dignified lives as contributing members of their families and communities.

In Oslo, Margaret Arach Oreh, a landmine survivor from Uganda, helped remind me of this challenge to the mine ban movement. Margaret recounted with great dignity the story of her encounter with a landmine which resulted in the loss of her leg. She has learned to live with the resulting physical challenges with dignity – what she cannot understand, what led her to cry in the name of all landmine survivors, is the

gap between the hope and promise of a Mine Ban Treaty that requires governments which are in a position to do so to provide for landmine survivors and the reality of resources made available for their assistance. This is another aspect of treaty obligations that clearly needs work.

After listening to Margaret, I stopped to think about how, in relative terms, so many more resources are made available to get mines out of the ground than to deal with the human survivors of those weapons. After wondering why this is the case it occurred to me that perhaps it is because once a mine is gone, it and its threat are gone forever. But landmine survivors continue to need assistance for as long as they live. A much more costly proposition. But, as another participant in Oslo noted, the ban movement is not about destroying mines, it is about saving lives and communities that mines destroy. The landmine movement is not about eliminating landmines just to eliminate a weapon – it was started as a humanitarian proposition to deal with human lives devastated for decades after the end of war by a weapon that happens to be a landmine. We seem to be falling down on our job.

So, in concluding, I would like to issue the following challenges – not just to those here at the Fourth Meeting of States Parties – but to all who are part of the global movement to eliminate landmines:

1) to continue to work together in the open partnership that is a hallmark of the mine ban model to ensure full implementation of and compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty, and to ensure universalization not just of the treaty, but of the new international norm, the new standard of behavior it has established, where any use of antipersonnel mines by any government or rebel group is rejected.

2) to continue to work together to critically assess mine action programs all over the world – whether they be NGO, commercial, military or under UN auspices – to minimize institutionalization, overlap, and competition for resources in order to maximize clearance so countries can meet treaty deadlines – and not for legalistic purposes but because it is only when countries are mine free that their citizens will be free to walk without fear;

and finally,

3) to work even more vigorously to address the significant gap between the hope offered to landmine survivors through the successes of the ban movement and the words of the Mine Ban Treaty – and the realities of too many of their lives in too many countries around the world.

In issuing these challenges, I recognize that one of the hallmarks of our work in the ban movement is to be forward looking. We do not pat ourselves on the back for what has already been accomplished, but to continue to ask the hard questions not about the many challenges that still remain to be dealt with – which is, in my view, the primary reason that we are all here this week for the Fourth Meeting of States Parties.

We must remain clear about the responsibilities of all of us who have been and continue to be leaders in the Oslo-Ottawa Mine Ban Process. All of the members of

the partnership for a mine free world continue to have immense responsibility – to the process that has brought about such amazing change, but also to continue to work as diligently in the next five years as we have in the first so that our successes in these next five years at a minimum mirror those of the first five – if we do that, we will be close to our goal of a world free of mines where all survivors can live in dignity.

These are challenges that we must not fail to meet.

THANK YOU.