



PORTUGAL 2007

**8th Meeting of States Parties to
the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**

**Dead Sea,
18 -22 November 2007**

**Statement by
Portugal on behalf of the European Union**

GENERAL STATEMENT

Amman, 18 November 2007

1. Following the request of the President-designate that delegations refrain from presenting orally their general statements, this Statement by the European Union is distributed in written form. The Candidate Countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this declaration.

Mr. Chairman,

2. The EU is grateful to the Kingdom of Jordan for hosting this meeting and for all the effort that has been put to make this a successful and productive meeting. It is particularly important that this meeting takes place in a country affected by landmines. It is a reminder to us of the continuing need to pursue our shared goal of a mine free world without any new anti-personnel mine victims.

3. The Eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and their Destruction is an important opportunity to measure progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Action Plan. We welcome the initiative and preparations by the President-designate his Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Al Hussein of Jordan to elaborate a Dead Sea Progress Report which contributes to better addressing the challenges ahead.

4. This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. Substantial progress has been achieved so far. The EU welcomes progress achieved in universalising and implementing the Convention by destroying stockpiled anti-personnel mines, clearing mined areas and assisting the victims.

5. Promoting and achieving universal acceptance of the Convention remains a priority. As at 15 August 2007 there were 155 States Parties to the Convention. However, States that are not yet Party to the Convention still retain large quantities of anti-personnel mines. The EU acknowledges the important role played by the Universalisation Contact Group. The EU will endeavour to promote the universal acceptance of the Convention and we call upon those States that have not yet done so, to join it without delay.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The EU recognizes the importance of engaging non-state Actors with the objectives of this Convention, and therefore supports the work of the organisation Geneva Call and its effort to bring non-state actors in compliance with the provisions of the Convention. The European Union stresses the importance of continuing the support, as appropriate, to mine action in order to assist affected populations in areas under the control of armed non-state actors. The EU requests that the work undertaken in promoting the objectives of the Convention should focus on the humanitarian aspects and that the utmost care should be taken to avoid any politicisation.

7. The financial support made available by the EU (including both the European Community and Member States) to mine action clearly illustrates its commitment towards a mine-free world. The total EU funding to mine action between 1997 and 2006 of over 1.5 billion euros represents almost half of the world's financial assistance to mine action in that period.

8. Following the entry into force of the new financial instruments for EC external assistance in the context of the 2007-2013 financial perspectives, the EC has been integrating mine action into long-term socio-economic development programmes, inter alia in order to better respond to national priorities and to enhance local ownership. In this context, EC support to actions against anti-personnel landmines (as well as explosive remnants of war) is being mainstreamed into country and regional assistance programmes. The European Community can also provide assistance for certain actions against anti-personnel mines using its crisis response instruments.

9. The universalisation and the full implementation of the Treaties and Conventions in the multilateral system have been at the heart of EU action in the area of non-proliferation and disarmament. Therefore the EU is in the process of adopting an EU Joint Action to support the Convention.

The EU will contribute an overall sum of 980 000 Euro to the promotion of the universality of the Convention and to the support in the preparation of its Second Review Conference 2009 and to the support for the full implementation of the Convention by States Parties.

This will be done through the organisations of up to 6 regional or sub-regional seminars aiming at increasing adherence to the Convention and preparing for the Review Conference and by providing for ongoing technical advice and up to 25 targeted technical assistance visits to States Parties with a view to provide advice for the full implementation of the Convention. The technical implementation of these projects will be carried out by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-Mining (GICHD).

Mr. Chairman,

10. We cannot ignore that undiminished efforts aimed at eradicating anti-personnel landmines worldwide are still required. The overall goal of the EU is to ensure there are no further anti-personnel mine victims in the world. However, there is still a long way to go. Enhanced cooperation among donor and recipient countries remain key factors for the success of international mine action activities. In this context, the EU commends the efforts and the coordination provided by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the GICHD and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

11. In achieving the overall goal of the Convention, the EU puts specific focus on the thematic objectives of reducing the anti-personnel landmine threat, alleviating mine victim suffering, providing socio-economic reintegration, and enhancing local and regional mine action capacity. It is also worth mentioning that the EU already includes Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) activities as part of European Community mine clearance operations, risk education and victim assistance.

12. The EU is committed to strengthening care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine survivors. We also emphasize that such assistance should be integrated into broader public health and socio-economic strategies. In this context, we consider that the recently adopted Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can provide the appropriate framework.

13. Let me now address the issue of compliance with the provisions of the Convention. The timely respect of obligations and deadlines set by the treaty for the destruction of national stockpiles and the clearance of mined areas constitutes a crucial element. Regional cooperation is an effective way to achieve these objectives.

14. We urge States to complete the destruction of their stockpiles of anti-personnel mines within time.

15. The mine clearance obligation of Article V is a core provision of this Convention and its full implementation poses a significant challenge to States affected by anti-personnel mines. This Meeting of State Parties will address the issue of Article V obligations and approaching deadlines. We shall endeavour to conclude work on procedural aspects concerning the extension requests and assess the state of progress in the drafting of requests on the part of States Parties which will be required to submit requests. However, as envisaged in the Nairobi Action Plan, we shall work with affected States Parties in an attempt to minimise extension requests.

16. Adherence to transparency measures, compliance procedures, and in particular, the adoption of national implementation measures, are essential in order to enhance confidence among States Parties.

17. We realize that the negative impact of anti-personnel landmines has been substantially reduced over the last 10 years. Nonetheless, much has to be done to curb the ongoing suffering of innocent civilians. The European Union would like to express once again its determined commitment to the objective of a mine free world without any new anti-personnel mine victims.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.