



Ninth Meeting of the States Parties

Opening Statement by HRH Prince Mired Raad Al-Hussein, Present of the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties

24 November 2008

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

I would like to convey my sincere thanks to all States Parties for having given me the honor of assuming the presidency of the 8th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. It has been a challenge that I have not taken lightly and one that I personally will always remember as one of the highlights of my life. As everybody here knows, our subject of landmines is intricate, time consuming, and incredibly difficult at times, yet it is a cause that is achievable, doable and deserves our unbridled attention.

It is my sincere belief that the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is in good health and that much has truly been achieved in the last ten years, however, we the States Parties must at all costs remain focused and adopt a long term strategy vis-à-vis landmines. The best analogy that I can give is that we are running a 'marathon' and that we still have quite a way to go. For the enthusiastic supporters along the sidelines and for those who have finished the race or are close to finishing...your encouragement and interest is vital for helping others complete the challenge. We the States Parties have to safeguard and maintain the stamina of the Convention and make sure that all mine affected states strive to the best of their ability to reach the end...an end which I believe is in sight for all.

During the course of this last year I have had three principal duties in my capacity as the President of the 8MSP, namely to chair the Coordinating Committee, to chair the Analyzing Group that has analyzed the Article 5 'extension requests' and lastly to promote the goals of the Convention by undertaking official visits to several states that remain outside the convention...for the sake of universalization, by visiting also States Parties that have missed stockpile destruction deadlines and visiting States Parties that have big challenges facing them.

Regarding the Coordinating Committee, I would just like to say what a pleasure it was to work and interact with all my colleagues and friends who made up the Committee. All the members of the Committee, those representing States Parties as well as the ICBL and ICRC made invaluable contributions to the work of the Committee.

With regard to the Analyzing Group, it too was an interesting experience. I will however refrain from commenting about it here because I will be reporting to you about it in detail later today or tomorrow...suffice to say that we broke new ground and as a group we did our level best to keep the standard of the requests as high as possible.

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Regarding the activities that I have undertaken to promote the Convention, it has been my conviction all along that I should try my best to get my foot in the door and to voice my opinion in front of officials and decisionmakers that landmines are not 'yesterday's issue' and that we can not and must not become complacent about it. We very much want the next ten years to be even better than the last ten have been. This can only be achieved if we strive harder collectively to raise the profile of the landmine issue and to maintain and if possible increase the interest of countries to combat the scourge of landmines. This will be difficult in the near term, especially with the global financial crisis that we are facing, however we must remain focused despite all the odds because peoples' lives are depending on our actions.

In closing...I would just like to say a quick word of thanks to my predecessor H.E. Ambassador Caroline Millar of Australia for her generous support and guidance to me when I first took over as President. I hope that I have managed to carry on the effort with the same enthusiasm and dedication that Her Excellency exemplified. I too would like to wish my dear friend H.E. Ambassador Jurg Streuli, the President of the 9MSP all my best wishes and support for the coming year.

Last but not least, I must acknowledge and praise the tremendous effort of Mr. Kerry Brinkert and the whole of the ISU for keeping us all on track. I have truly been amazed by their professionalism and unyielding dedication over the course of these last two years. I cannot express enough what an honour and delight it has been to work with them and I strongly urge all States Parties to support further the exceptional work of the ISU.

With that said, I thank you once again for the great honour that you bestowed upon me and pray that I have served you and the Convention well.

Thank you to you all.