



## **Special Envoy to visit Lebanon to encourage it to take concrete steps towards joining landmark humanitarian disarmament treaty**

*Beirut, Brussels, Geneva 2 October 2019* –Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium, in as Special Envoy of the international treaty that bans anti-personnel mines is set to meet the President of the Lebanese Republic on 4 October to promote the humanitarian aims of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (also known as *Ottawa Convention*).

Princess Astrid's two-day visit to Lebanon includes a stop in Beirut where she will meet the President of the Lebanese Republic H.E. General Michel Aoun and the Minister of Defence, with a message to encourage the Lebanese leadership to take steps towards joining this important humanitarian disarmament instrument. Currently more than 80% of the world's States have adhered to the Convention that prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines, mandates their destruction and calls on its members to provide assistance to mine survivors.

"States Parties to the Convention have recognised the need to promote this landmark instrument at the highest of levels as the common understanding amongst its 164 members is that there is no conceivable utility of these weapons that outweighs and justifies their devastating and long-term humanitarian and societal cost," said H.E. Hubert Cooreman, Ambassador of Belgium in Lebanon a key figure in the organisation of this visit. "This conviction led Belgium to enact national legislation banning the weapon since 1995."

Her Royal Highness's visit is sponsored by a Decision adopted by the European Union Council seeking to support efforts to implement the Convention and promote its norms among States that have not yet joined such as the Lebanese Republic.

"The Convention is an example of what the European Union stands for. A rules-based international order, rooted in respect for human rights and international humanitarian law," said H.E. Ralph Tarraf, the European Union's Ambassador in Lebanon. "Together with partners worldwide, we urge all countries that have not yet done so, including the Lebanese Republic, to accede to the Convention as soon as possible."

In addition to the Belgian representative in Lebanon, Norway in its capacity as President of the Convention represented by H.E. Leni Stenseth Ambassador of Norway to Lebanon, will accompany the Special Envoy in her meeting with the President. The Convention's States Parties are set to meet from 25-29 November in Norway to discuss next steps in implementing the treaty. The Lebanese Republic has been invited to participate as an Observer.

Belgium, the European Union and Norway are longstanding donors in mine action supporting mine clearance and risk education, assistance to victims, stockpile destruction, research and development on mine detection and clearance, and continuously leading efforts to promote the Convention and its norms across the globe. To date, 164 States have joined the Convention destroying together more than 52 million anti-personnel mines. These efforts have saved countless lives and cleared millions of square metres of once-dangerous lands freeing them for their safe use.