



Press Release

South Asia closer to total landmine ban with Sri Lanka officially becoming a State Party to landmark treaty

Colombo, Geneva – After having acceded six months ago, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has come into effect for Sri Lanka as of 1 June 2018.

As of this date and in accordance with treaty provisions, Sri Lanka undertakes to “never, under any circumstances, use, produce or transfer anti-personnel mines.” In addition, Sri Lanka has undertaken to destroy its stockpiled mines within the next four years, remove anti-personnel mines from affected areas within the next ten, and committed to assist victims and survivors of these weapons to live on an equal basis with other members of society.

“Sri Lanka is facing the harrowing ordeal of the absolute terror and indiscriminate nature of these weapons. We have witnessed first-hand the devastation they cause to life and how productive land is turned to waste,” said Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tilak Marapana. “This is the reason why Sri Lanka made mine clearance and mine risk education a priority. We now look forward to continue these efforts supported by those in the international community wanting to partner with Sri Lanka and be part of this success,” said Minister Marapana.

Mine clearance in Sri Lanka is undertaken under the Ministry of Resettlement, Reconstruction and Hindu Religious Affairs. Minister D. M. Swaminathan who oversees these efforts said his Ministry will continue steady in its operations.

“While the Convention grants Sri Lanka 10 years to clear landmine contamination we have an ambitious plan to return mine contaminated lands to its people by 2020. This is an achievable goal, especially if Sri Lanka -- which has shown tremendous commitment to this cause -- can receive the international assistance it requires now that we are part of this landmark treaty. For this purpose, Sri Lanka is hosting an individualised approach meeting with partners next week in Geneva,” said Minister Swaminathan, referring to a special conference between Sri Lanka and its mine action donors and partners taking place during the Convention’s intersessional meetings on 7-8 June at the WMO in Geneva.

“Well done Sri Lanka. You have taken a leadership role in South Asia,” said Convention Special Envoy HRH Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein who met with Sri Lanka’s President, Prime Minister, and Minister of Resettlement, Reconstruction and Hindu Religious Affairs in March 2018, during an official visit.

“Sri Lanka stands proudly amongst the Convention’s States Parties in South Asia. There is something very noble about standing with the few – it also carries great responsibility. I encourage Sri Lanka to continue steady on its mine clearance efforts, support mine victims’ rights, and promote the Convention among South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) States that have not yet joined the Convention,” said HRH referring to SAARC members India, Nepal and Pakistan which remain outside the Convention.

The Convention, adopted and signed in 1997, entered into force in 1999. Under the Convention, 30 of 61 mine-affected States have declared completion of their mine clearance obligation, freeing for normal use millions of square metres of land. All but 33 of the world’s States have joined the Convention; most of which obey its norms.