

The Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World

High-Level Segment

Intervention by Ambassador Christian Strohal

Check against delivery

Madame President,
Mr Vice President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Austria fully endorses the statement delivered by the European Union earlier this morning. I would like to add some remarks from a national perspective.

This week's summit takes place under a clear slogan: "A Shared Commitment". These three words capture what the Mine Ban Convention is all about. When States negotiated a treaty on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines more than a decade ago, they understood that their task would not be easy and that, if they were to achieve the goal of a mine-free-world, they would have to do so in a truly joint effort.

The Cartagena Summit gives us an opportunity to take stock and assess achievements and shortcomings in the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention, and we have done so over the past three days. Now, it gives us the opportunity to renew this "shared commitment" among all States Parties and redouble our efforts. Let me use this opportunity to congratulate the four States party that have declared themselves mine-free, as well as all others who have completed their core obligations since the Nairobi Review Conference. I would also like to express our appreciation to our Columbian hosts not only for their hospitality and organization, but also for the

active role they are playing, in particular in putting our Summit into the concrete perspective of what really counts – the reality on the ground.

Madam President,

The Ottawa Convention represents a milestone in international disarmament endeavors and is often referred to as a “success story” in humanitarian disarmament. In fact, its success has served as an inspiration for another treaty to which Austria attaches utmost importance, the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Both stand in a long tradition of IHL and share a common purpose: to protect civilians in armed conflicts and post-war settings. Last month the UN Security Council under Austrian Presidency adopted Resolution 1894 on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It calls on States to consider signing, ratifying or acceding to relevant instruments of IHL. It also calls on States to protect the civilian population from the effects of landmines and other explosive remnants of war and, I quote, “to provide assistance for the care, rehabilitation and economic and social reintegration of victims, including persons with disabilities”.

This leads me to two key points: the universalization of the Ottawa Convention and its victim assistance provisions.

With 156 States Parties, the Mine Ban Treaty encompasses the majority of states most heavily affected by anti-personnel mines. Furthermore, the Convention has established an international norm which is also widely respected among states that have not yet joined this important humanitarian instrument. Some of these States are actively supporting clearance, training and other mine action activities, one of them is even spearheading humanitarian mine action. We call on all States, in particular those who are already supporting the implementation of the Convention, to review their position on the occasion of the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World and to sign and ratify the Convention as soon as possible. Austria strongly welcomes the participation, for the first time, of a delegation from the US and encourages them to continue to review its land mine policy, while appreciating their leadership role in humanitarian mine action.

Let me now address what constitutes the *"raison d'être"* of the Convention: survivors of anti-personnel mines, their affected families and communities. When signing the Convention in Ottawa in December 1997 we gave mine victims a promise for a better life. We did so because we believed that mine victims, many of whom are persons with disabilities, had a fundamental right, that they were entitled to a life in dignity. Over the past ten years, this conviction was further embedded in international law – most importantly through the entry into force of the CRPD in May 2008, which has the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society at its core. Austria is grateful to victims and survivors for their active involvement in, and contribution to, making the Convention a reality.

Earlier this year in Geneva, the Austrian Foreign Minister, Dr. Michael Spindelegger, presented a global study on Victim Assistance. The study, which had been co-financed by Norway and Austria, and is entitled "Voices from the Ground", has been conducted by Handicap International and examines the improvements the Ottawa Convention brought to the lives of survivors in affected countries from 2005-2009. The results are somewhat sobering and illustrate that we have to redouble our efforts in order to fulfil our promise to the victims. Therefore, we would like to congratulate our president in particular for her leadership in shaping the Cartagena Action Plan's provisions on victim assistance. This set of concrete actions, when implemented, will bring about real and lasting improvements in the lives of mine victims. I would also like to use this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to civil society for their strong engagement in this regard and reassure you once again of Austria's commitment to contribute.

Madam President,

"A Shared Commitment" – we know what this mean in concrete terms: it means national ownership on the part of affected States; it means continued readiness and willingness on the part of the donor community; it means that all of us take the obligations of the Mine Ban Treaty seriously, and that all of continue to cooperate to ensure its full implementation. We owe it to the victims, and to future generations.

I thank you.