

Mine Ban Convention, Second Review Conference

High Level Segment, 3 December 2009

Statement by State Secretary Gry Larsen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends

Let me first thank our host for their hospitality and well organized conference. We have been impressed by your commitment to make this a success.

Ladies and gentlemen, Every year, an unacceptable number of civilians become victims of armed and explosive violence.

Armed violence causes fear and insecurity. It undermines human rights and hinders development. It tears the social fabric apart, threatens peace and security and causes vast economic damage. Armed violence is a serious threat to our common efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

One thing is sure: We need to find ways to effectively tackle this ongoing humanitarian crisis. That is what we started more than a decade ago. The Mine Ban Convention laid the foundation for a new international security framework addressing one important form of armed violence that causes unacceptable harm to civilians.

This framework, based on international humanitarian law and built around a principle of global solidarity with victims, together with partnerships between states, the United Nations, international organisations and civil society, has proven to be the right approach.

Ten years of implementing the Mine Ban Convention have produced impressive results. But not only impressive results: The convention has also inspired promising new initiatives that will improve human security and the protection of civilians during and after armed conflict worldwide.

For more than 150 years, international law has aimed at preventing excessive civilian deaths and injuries resulting from war. The principle of distinction is a cornerstone of all international humanitarian law instruments. But the movement towards a ban on anti-personnel mines recognised that this general principle was not sufficient.

Some weapons need to be explicitly banned because they cannot be used in any way compatible with the obligation to distinguish between military objects and civilians.

In armed conflicts, international humanitarian law accepts the need to strike a balance between military necessity and humanitarian concerns. But anti-personnel mines have continued to kill long after conflicts were over, when their military necessity could not be justified. The ban advocates presented this very effectively, and prompted states to take action to adjust the laws to reflect realities.

The result was a treaty that effectively opened up new perspectives: taking as a starting point the humanitarian effects caused by the use of certain weapons. The convention introduced a new way of thinking. It introduced humanitarian disarmament. It also introduced the concept of victim assistance into the disarmament field.

Two new conventions reflect this:

- The Convention on Cluster Munitions gives a comprehensive definition of victims that strengthens international humanitarian law in this area.
- The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities lays down the human rights of survivors to full inclusion in society, through accessibility and equality of opportunity.

But even though there have been successes, let us never forget that, too many people still remain at risk. Women, girls, boys and men are killed and injured by anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosives every day. There are still too many survivors who are denied basic human rights and are unable to live a life in dignity.

This is unacceptable and we are here in Cartagena to ensure that this situation is brought to an end. Compliance with the obligations of the Mine Ban Convention is the most effective way of doing so:

We must ensure that mined areas are cleared. That the remaining stockpiles are destroyed and that victims and survivors enjoy their rights.

Compliance will make a difference.

Friends,

When we agreed on the Mine Ban Convention, we took a major step together to improve local and national human security and development. It was a bold step at the time. Now, few – if any – would argue in favour of the military necessity to use anti-personnel mines. The Convention has become a norm. We know that we are now faced with challenges similar to the global crisis addressed by the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Armed violence causes unacceptable harm to civilians all over the world, every day. We need to act on these challenges – together. The Norwegian Government is ready to cooperate with you in a broad range of arenas to continue working for the reduction and prevention of armed violence in the years ahead.

The Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World has demonstrated the potential that lies in the partnerships that brought us the Mine Ban Convention.

The expectations, lessons learned, and commitments set out in the Cartagena Declaration will guide our work over the next five years.

We look forward to joining all of you in our shared commitment for a mine-free world.

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