

ICBL statement on Universalization

Mine Ban Treaty Intersessional Meeting, Geneva 18-20 June 2024

Thank you, Mr. President,

The Oslo Action Plan opens with the words, “Ensuring the full universalization and implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is vital for protecting people and putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.” In this simple sentence, States Parties stressed the importance of universalization, as an activity, under this convention.

In the past quarter century, our convention has established a global norm against the use of antipersonnel landmines. That is a remarkable achievement. However, those few states which have not yet joined the convention remain prepared to use, regularly train with, and keep stockpiles of antipersonnel mines which pose a threat to people around the world. Bringing them on board will not be easy, as there is little low-hanging fruit left.

I know this. In the past few weeks, I was part of a universalization outreach mission by the ICBL-CMC to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Both have used antipersonnel landmines, both are contaminated, and both traumatized by the recent armed conflict. They are engaged in discussions to establish an irreversible peace. The mine ban could be both a support, and a benefit, of that process but unfortunately, for the moment, neither of the two countries see that benefit.

We were happy to hear from Azerbaijan, Laos, Morocco and South Korea today. We encourage these and other states remaining outside to take further steps to join the convention without delay.

States Parties and all partners must be prepared to work methodically over a longer time span with sustained attention to bring onboard those remaining outside the convention. One off engagement will no longer serve.

While engaging States not party in the convention we must assure that the norms are not weakened by use of antipersonnel landmines by states outside the treaty. The ultimate way to prevent landmine use and to eradicate them is by joining the treaty. Short of that, the international norm has to be protected and strengthened by the stigmatization of landmines, condemning their use by anyone, anywhere, and at all times.

ICBL is appalled by the extensive use of these nefarious weapons by Russia in Ukraine which have caused hundreds of casualties as well as immense human suffering. It is the first time that landmines are used by a State not party on the territory of a State Party. As mentioned in our previous interventions, we also remain deeply concerned over the use by the concerned State Party.

In Myanmar use of antipersonnel landmines has become even more widespread, with UNICEF reporting in 2023 triple the number of casualties to antipersonnel landmines it reported in 2022.

Most recently we have been alarmed by reports of new mine laying by North Korea on its borders with South Korea and with China.

In addition, several Non-State Armed Groups continue using improvised antipersonnel mines in a handful of countries.

All use needs to be condemned. We call on States Parties who have not yet done so, to speak out.

The Oslo Action Plan features a series of highly relevant, practical and actionable steps for states to take towards this goal. We are calling for much greater diplomatic engagement and action to shore up the convention by promoting its universalization under the Siem Reap Angkor Action Plan. We urge states to:

engage in the capitals of States not parties; promote military to military dialogue; and include other relevant stakeholders as local civil society. We also encourage you to use other instruments to pursue universalization, such as state submissions at the Human Rights Council during the Universal Periodic Review process.

The ICBL provides grants to our local member organizations for the promotion of the convention at the national level through the Investing in Action programme. Our members in Azerbaijan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the US, and in the Middle East region are some of the recipients of our grant programme this year. If you intend to reach out to the authorities in these countries to promote their adhesion to the convention, please consider collaborating with ICBL local members who can assist and further follow-up, as appropriate.

In closing, we would like to applaud the immense universalization outreach carried out by the President over the past months. At the same time, we encourage other States Parties to act on their commitments from the Oslo Action Plan to “Use all available avenues to promote ratification of/accession to the Convention by States not party”.

Thank you.