

**Belgian Presidency of the Anti-Personnel Mine
Ban Convention – Address to the Conference on
Disarmament – 03/03/2015**

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament,
Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to address the Conference on Disarmament in my capacity as the President of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Belgium is – and has always been – a leading advocate of the Convention. We were one of the prime-players in the negotiations that created the Convention. We were the first state to declare a complete ban on anti-personnel mines and to proceed with their destruction. We have since worked continuously at the further universalization of the Convention and on issues of transparency.

On March 1st, the International Community celebrated the 16th anniversary of the entry into force of this landmark humanitarian and disarmament instrument.

Sixteen years is a significant amount of time. It is therefore timely to step back and to take stock of what has been achieved during this period and also to reflect on the challenges still ahead.

With the accession of Oman, there are now 162 States Parties that have made a solemn commitment to end suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. Moreover, several non-signatory States to the Convention have either supported the yearly UN Resolution on the Convention or directly signaled their clear aspiration to eventually accede to it. The anti-

landmine Convention therefore moves gradually closer to its goal of universal membership.

Of course, ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines means more than only achieving universal acceptance by the Convention.

More than 47 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed since the Convention entered into force. This in itself is remarkable. The same can be said about clearance of mines from the field. Yet, it is too early to declare victory. Sizeable stocks still remain and in too many places minefields still represent a danger for the civilian populations. More determination is needed from the governments – members and non-members of the Convention – to see destruction and clearance activities through to their full completion, if necessary, with assistance from outside. The road is still long. It is the more intractable situations that remain to be resolved.

Allow me to cite a few examples:

- At least four instances have been reported of alleged use of landmines on the territory - currently or formerly controlled - by States Parties - in despite of the prohibition on the use of anti-personnel landmines as contained in the Convention;
- Moreover, three States Parties have not been in a position to destroy their anti-personnel landmines within the period mandated by the Convention;
- Furthermore, two other States Parties currently face the challenging task of complying with 2015 mine-clearance deadlines.

In the mean-time, victims of landmines continue to suffer. In 2013, a global total of 3.308 casualties was reported. Although this a technical 24% decline compared with the total of 4.325 victims in 2012, each casualty is a casualty too much.

During the Maputo Review Conference of June 2014, States Parties agreed to the Maputo Declaration. This Declaration affirms the political goal to achieve a mine-free world by 2025.

The achievement of this goal should be based upon our shared, continued and active involvement:

- To universalize the Convention;
- To fund its activities and to implement its obligations.
- To promote its activities.

Our Convention is historic and our progress has been tremendous. As success is begging for success, this should entice us to do more and to seek our goal even more assiduously.

During our Presidency we pledge to reinforce the political commitment to the Ant-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and to its goals, to streamline its work program, to raise the transparency of its proceedings and to improve further its effectiveness. We have planned activities to raise awareness and we are working on reporting procedures that would be at the same time user friendly and well targeted to the objective they are supposed to serve. In short, we would propose to transform them into efficient management tools geared to realize the Convention's objectives.

We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to the Convention, we owe it to thousands of victims who carry the scourge for the rest of their lifetime.

I thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Secretary-General for this opportunity to address this august body.

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