

Press Release



Tonga leaders express solidarity with the movement to ban landmines and with Pacific nations affected by explosive remnants of war

Nuka'alofa, Tonga, 7 October 2011 – “Tonga is considering accession to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention,” said His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Al Hussein of Jordan, after concluding a two-day visit to the Pacific island nation. “While Tonga is not affected by the explosive hazards from past conflicts, it knows well the harm caused by anti-personnel mines as its soldiers have served in heavily mine-affected countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq,” said Prince Mired. “In addition, Tongan leaders expressed to me their solidarity with other Pacific nations that are affected by explosive remnants of war.”

Prince Mired visited the Kingdom of Tonga 5-7 October for meetings with Tonga’s Prime Minister, Lord Tu’ivakano, the Minister of Justice, Clive Edwards, the Acting Commander of Tonga’s Defence Services and the President of the Tongan Red Cross Society.

“Tonga’s accession would bring us one step closer to universal adherence to this landmark treaty in the Pacific and would give additional momentum to the global movement to eradicate landmines,” said Prince Mired.

To date, 13 of the 16 Member States of the Pacific Islands Forum have ratified or acceded to the Convention, also known as the *Ottawa Convention*, which bans anti-personnel mines and obliges states to clear mined areas, destroy existing stockpiles and assist survivors.

“I am encouraged that the Kingdom of Tonga may soon take its place as an equal member of the family of states committed to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines,” added Prince Mired. “I would be delighted if Tonga’s accession could happen as soon as the Convention’s Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties in Cambodia.” The Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties, or 11MSP, will take place from 27 November to 2 December 2011 in Phnom Penh.

Prince Mired’s visit was the latest effort in a global campaign to engage, at a high level, States that have not yet acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. This campaign also featured senior Cambodian Minister PRAK Sokhonn leading a mission to Singapore on 4 October to urge that country’s leadership to increase its involvement in the anti-landmines movement. Minister PRAK Sokhonn will chair the 11MSP, a major world event that will highlight the need for continued efforts to clear mines and assist survivors in South East Asia and other mine-affected regions of the world.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

The AP Mine Ban Convention was adopted in Oslo in 1997, opened for signature in Ottawa the same year and entered into force in 1999.

To date 157 States are parties to the Convention, 153 of them no longer hold stocks of anti-personnel mines.

Over 44.5 million mines have been destroyed by the States Parties. 34 of 50 States that at one time manufactured anti-personnel mines are now bound by the Convention’s ban on production. Most other parties have put in place moratoria on production and / or transfers of mines.

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Demining has resulted in millions of square metres of once dangerous land being released for normal human activity.

The most recent country to accede was Tuvalu in September 2011 bringing almost near universal acceptance of the Convention in the Pacific. Apart from Tonga, in the Pacific, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands have not yet joined the Convention.

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