



Intersessional Meetings of the Mine Ban Treaty
Statement on Universalization
20 May 2016 (agenda item #7a.)

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines praises Sri Lanka's decision in March 2016 to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty. We look forward to the completion of the accession process as soon as possible and we hope to see Sri Lanka attend the 15th Meeting of States Parties as the 163rd member of the treaty, at the end of this year in Santiago.

While it is disappointing that no states have joined the Mine Ban Treaty in 2015 or this year, we know that all states not party can and will join the global ban and that it is a matter of time. We commend those states not party that have taken steps toward accession of the treaty. There is no doubt that all positive steps and progress on the eradication of antipersonnel mines help to achieve our common goal of a mine-free world.

The new government of Myanmar is formed by a party that has supported the Mine Ban Treaty. However, as of now, no action has been taken by the new government to join the treaty. The parliament has not yet discussed Myanmar's landmine policy or the need for mine clearance. The use of landmines by the government forces and non-state armed groups continues. The parliament of Myanmar has to revise the country's policy on landmine and should support mine clearance to begin as soon as possible. There is a need for States Parties supporting Myanmar to proactively encourage mine clearance, a total ban on the use of landmines and accession to the treaty. We have the side event on impact of landmines – that was organized by the ICBL yesterday – has contributed to understand the ongoing devastating impact of landmines amongst civilians and the need to immediately stop using landmines and start mine clearance in Myanmar.

As we have said in the past, the United States' policy on landmines is a positive step, but the exception for the Korean Peninsula is disappointing, because landmines are indiscriminate no matter where they are used. Many retired US military officers, including those who commanded forces in Korea, have said that using antipersonnel mines there is of little or no military value. Therefore the US should remove the exception for Korea and join the treaty.

Five years have passed since Nepal stated that recommendations regarding accession to the Mine Ban Treaty would be completed "soon". The reason for Nepal's delay in acceding to the treaty remains unclear. Joining the treaty will not create significant operational work for Nepal, because it has already completed clearance of all known mined areas, it appears to have a relatively small stockpile, and it has been establishing systems for implementation of victim assistance.

In 2014, Cuba stated that it fully shares the humanitarian concerns relating to the indiscriminate use of antipersonnel landmines. However, its policy on accession to the Mine Ban Treaty has not evolved in recent years. We applaud Cuba for acceding to the Convention on Cluster Munitions last month and encourage Cuba to follow suit and participate in the 15th Meeting of States Parties in Santiago as a State Party to the Mine Ban Treaty. Similarly we encourage Convention on Cluster Munitions' States Parties, such as Lebanon and Lao PDR to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty as both treaties share the same humanitarian objectives.

Universalization of the treaty is also about ensuring the ban is respected by non-state armed groups. A number of ICBL members engage with those groups, such as Geneva Call that offered training on international humanitarian law to active combatants in Iraq and Syria since the 14th Meeting of States Parties. Other activities with armed groups included a two-day meeting between the Colombian authorities, the FARC and the ELN, to exchange information on demining and reinforce the participation of local communities in decision-making. It was co-hosted with UNMAS.

Over the past year, ICBL members undertook advocacy activities in numerous states not party to encourage accession or steps toward joining the treaty. This included Azerbaijan, India, Iran, South Korea, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Syria, United States and Vietnam.

Universalization of the treaty and ban norm are crucial to make sure that landmines are never used again. States that are unable to join the treaty now should take concrete interim steps toward a total ban and commit to no further use, production and transfer of landmines.

Madam President – We are at your disposal to complement and support your efforts, and other States Parties' efforts, in promoting the Mine Ban Treaty. Thank you.