

Press Release



Convention banning landmines to return to its roots

Geneva, 24 June 2011 – “Two decades after the movement to ban anti-personnel mines was born in the border regions of Cambodia, the Convention is returning to a place where it all started,” said H.E. Gazmend Turdiu, the senior Albanian diplomat presiding over the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Gazmend Turdiu made his remarks during the concluding day of the week-long meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention’s Standing Committees. At these meetings, over 400 delegates representing over 100 States and dozens of non-governmental organizations laid the groundwork for a major international conference on landmines which will take place later this year in Cambodia. The *Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties or 11MSP* will take place in Phnom Penh from 28 November to 2 December 2011.

“Unlike other disarmament treaties, born in Washington or Moscow, Geneva or New York, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention emerged from the reality faced by people in Battambang, Cambodia; in the Tete Province of Mozambique; in Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua; in the Canton of Tuzla in Bosnia and Herzegovina; in Afghanistan’s Parwan Province and in countless other mine infested villages in the world,” said H.E. Prak Sokhonn, the Cambodian Minister who will preside over the 11MSP.

“In Geneva this week, we have begun the countdown to what will be a remarkable world event in Cambodia later this year,” said H.E. Prak Sokhonn. “We will remind the international community that this international treaty has a human face. It is the face of the girl or boy who survived an explosion and now lives with a disability, the farmer who must cultivate land in hazardous areas, the deminer who risks her or his life on a daily basis, and those advocates who for two decades have sought to rid the world of anti-personnel mines”.

What took place during the meetings of the Standing Committees:

New landmine use: The Convention’s President, H.E. Gazmend Turdiu of Albania, expressed “deep concern” about reports of new mine use in Libya and reminded the world that, at the landmark 2009 *Cartagena Summit*, States had “accepted that they would condemn and continue to discourage in every possible way any production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines by any actors.”

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and several States also expressed concern on the recent use of landmines. Norway called on States Parties to “follow up, investigate and condemn when confirmed,” the use of landmines.

Mine clearance: Nigeria became the 17th State Party, out of the 54 that had declared having mined areas, to complete its mine clearance obligations under the Convention. In total, 820 anti-personnel landmines, 325 anti-vehicle landmines and 17,516 other explosive remnants of war were destroyed. Nigeria will present a formal declaration of completion at the 11MSP.

AP Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

Algeria, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Eritrea presented requests for extensions on their ten-year deadlines for mine clearance. These requests will be considered at the 11MSP in Cambodia.

Algeria has requested five more years to complete implementation and Chile has requested eight years. The DRC has requested two years to obtain the required information concerning the extent of the work remaining to implement the Convention after which it will return to the States Parties to request additional time to implement its plans. Eritrea has requested three years to undertake similar actions.

Victim assistance: States Parties highlighted the link between their efforts and those of all others concerned about removing barriers to persons with disabilities. The World Health Organization presented its landmark *World Report on Disability*, noting: “More than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability. That means there are more than one billion people, including landmine survivors around the world, who want access, better attitudes and inclusion”.

Stockpile destruction: To date, approximately 44 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed by the States Parties. Four States Parties still in the process of completing their stockpile destruction programmes (Belarus, Greece, Turkey and Ukraine) provided updates on their efforts.

Turkey reported that it has now destroyed approximately 3 million stockpiled mines and that its destruction programme is 99.23 percent complete.

Universalization: Several States that are not yet party to the Convention provided updates on steps they are taking toward ratification or accession of it. Finland announced that a “bill will be submitted to Parliament promptly after the summer break in order for the Convention to be ratified in 2012.” Poland indicated that it “is expected to ratify the Convention in 2012”.

Morocco said that while it has not joined the Convention it “voluntarily applies its dispositions and fulfils without prejudice its humanitarian objectives including demining and victim assistance.” The Lao PDR talked about its “intention to accede to the Convention” and highlighted its willingness to provide a voluntary transparency report. The island nation of Tuvalu, participating in the work of the Convention for the first time, stated that it “is here to listen and hopefully become a member in the near future”.

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For more information, interviews or information regarding the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or the meetings of the Convention’s Standing Committees, please email: ISU@APMineBanConvention.org or contact Laila Rodriguez at +41 (0) 22 906 1679.