

Intersessional Meeting of the States Parties of the Convention on the Prohibition of the use,stockpiling,production and transfer of antipersonnel mines and on their destruction.

Intervention of Belgium – Coordinator of the contact group on universalization- Geneva 27 May 2013

Mr Chairman,
Dear Colleagues

A lot of progress has been made since the Convention to ban antipersonnel mines entered into force on the 1st of March 1999. The convention has been signed by 161 states and in 2012 alone, 3 new countries have acceded to it which is very encouraging.

We have in this room some non members of the Convention attending the intersessional meeting as observers. I 'd like to welcome Georgia, Lebanon, Oman and Sri Lanka and underline that we're very happy to have such an opportunity to continue the dialogue.

Even if the Ottawa Convention is frequently referred to as a pivotal universal standard in international humanitarian law, we 're still convinced that accession to a legally binding instrument is indispensable to achieve the objective of a world free of mines.

It is essential to keep mine action high on the agenda and to continue the efforts to convince the last 35 countries to join the Convention so that our goal of a world free of mines can be reached.

It's a collective effort that is reflected in the provisions of the action plan of Cartagena , mainly in actions 1 to 6 devoted to the universalization efforts to be achieved between 2010 and 2014.

We formally underlined at the Cartagena Summit that *“the most prevalent barrier to universal acceptance of the Convention remains a persistent view on the part of many States not parties that a perceived marginal military utility derived from anti-personnel mines is not outweighed by the grave humanitarian consequences of their use. More intensive efforts likely are needed, with new tools, to overcome outdated thinking about the utility of anti-personnel mines.”*

We noted as well that there was a *“dire need for States Parties, at the ministerial level or higher, to engage with States not parties.”*

I am pleased that since the Second Review Conference took place many States Parties have been acting on our Cartagena Summit commitments. These actions have been supported by the ISU in many instances and have been carried out as a complement to the undying efforts of the ICBL and ICRC. We are also thankful for the ongoing commitment of the UN, including the UN Secretary-General and I'd like to reiterate our gratitude to Prince Mired of Jordan to serve as a Special Envoy

A lot of State Parties participate in the efforts to universalization . The universalization contact group here in Geneva met a couple of times since the 12th MSP in December last year and agreed on a list of 8 priority countries for the years 2012 to 2014 . These are Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Libya, Mongolia, Oman, Tonga and the United States. This priority list has been elaborated on the basis of the assessment of possible progress to be made until the next review conference.

As far as Belgium is concerned , our Foreign Minister has demarched his counterparts from Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar and Oman during bilateral meetings and will do the same in his future meetings with the countries concerned.

Also the Council of the European Union has adopted a decision in November 2012 to grant a funding of 1 million € to support the convention and its universalization process . The ISU is in charge of the implementation of the decision and will be able to give us some good news during the meeting of the contact group that will take place today at 1 pm in the Lake room on the 3rd floor.

Being now 14 months ahead of the 3rd Review Conference it is time to take stock of our efforts , to look to the future to see what more can be achieved by July 2014 and to decide on what we wish to commit to about universalization after the Third Review Conference.

While we may have come to the end of the road with respect to sizeable numbers of new adherents in the near term, we are convinced that a degree of intensity on universalization must continue. It will be important if for anything to ensure that we continue to communicate to those who have not yet joined the Ottawa Convention that the use of anti-personnel mines is an unacceptable behaviour and that the world would be a better place if anti-personnel mines were eradicated.

As Contact Group Coordinator, Belgium wishes to initiate a dialogue on this matter and ultimately provide input to the President-Designate of the Third Review Conference.

I would like to share with you three ideas:

- could we commit to systematically include the Ottawa convention on the agenda of the bilateral meetings with countries who have not yet ratified the convention?
- taking into account the action nr 6 of the action plan of Carthage, it seems to us that the countries that have accepted the humanitarian principle of the Oslo convention on cluster munitions should be on our priority list for the universalization of the Ottawa convention. Could we create in these countries and in the 8 priority countries a group of ambassadors of like minded countries that as “the friends of the convention of Ottawa” could engage with local authorities . They could better explain to them the advantages of joining the convention and explain to us, through their experience in the country, the main obstacles that the countries where they are posted in are facing on the way to ratification.
- How can we react more efficiently to allegations of use, considering the provisions of action nr 5 of the action plan of Carthage ?

We look forward to engaging interested partners in this dialogue, today here in the plenary meeting and in the meeting of the Contact Group, which will take place at 13:00 in the Lake Room on the third floor.

I thank you for your attention.