

President's Statement on the General Status of the Convention

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Introduction:

It has been our practice that the President provides an overview of the general status of the Convention. It is my pleasure to do so.

The Cartagena Summit injected new life and energy into our movement. It gave us a chance to look back five years to take stock of achievements and highlight sizeable challenges that remain. And Cartagena refocused our collective efforts on overcoming these challenges with the Cartagena Action Plan serving as our road map for the next five years.

Little time has passed since we were so warmly received by Colombia at the Cartagena Summit. But already there is evidence that we are acting on the commitments we made then.

Universalization:

With respect to universalisation, it has been our recent tradition that the Presidency plays a leading role in promoting further acceptance of our Convention. My aim as President has been to do the same, but with a view to addressing one of the key universalisation challenges identified in Cartagena. That is, in Cartagena we acknowledged that "future efforts to promote acceptance of the Convention and its norms will require intensive effort at as high a level as possible."

In response to this challenge, I sought high level help. I found it in our good friend Prince Mired of Jordan who accepted my request to serve as the President's High Level Envoy on the universalization of the Convention. While Prince Mired will report to you later this morning on his activities, I do want to remark that this effort is already making a difference. Leaders of States not parties are being engaged at a level that we have not seen for several years. Through persistent efforts on the part of all States Parties and others, our numbers should continue to grow in coming years.

Stockpile destruction:

With respect to stockpile destruction, the States Parties' transparency reports point to the fact that together we have destroyed more than 43 million mines. While continuing to address remaining complex challenges, we must not forget that the destruction of 43 million stockpiled mines is an incredible accomplishment.

Concerning the work that remains, in Cartagena we accepted that we all have a role in ensuring that serious present day challenges are addressed and that we act prudently to ensure that there are no future cases of missed deadlines.

Belarus, Greece, Turkey and Ukraine will report this afternoon on the status of their efforts. However, we should note that together these States Parties account for more than 11.3 million mines that must still be destroyed. We should also recall that two of these States Parties – Belarus and Ukraine – have sought assistance in accordance with Article 6, paragraph 1 of the Convention. As we recorded in Cartagena, "this implies that the matter of ensuring compliance on the part of Belarus and Ukraine is the business of all States Parties."

Mine clearance:

With respect to mine clearance, in Cartagena we both celebrated the declarations of completion of Article 5 implementation by four States Parties – Albania, Greece, Rwanda and Zambia – and agreed to grant four more States Parties extra time to fulfill their obligations. As of the close of the Cartagena Summit, there were 15 States Parties that had completed implementation of Article 5. Tomorrow we can anticipate hearing the formal announcement that a 16th has now also accomplished this task.

Of course our work to ensure that all mined areas are made safe for normal human activity must continue. In this regard, let us recall, as we did in Cartagena that “one of the first challenges faced by many States Parties that must still complete implementation of Article 5 is to undertake or complete the task...to make every effort to identify all areas...in which anti-personnel mines are known or suspected to be emplaced.”

Several States Parties, including some for which the Convention entered into force several years ago, have not yet provided clarity pursuant to their obligation to report on the location of all mined areas that contain or are suspect to contain, anti-personnel mines. In Cartagena, we agreed that “It is reasonable to expect that all relevant States Parties could overcome this challenge prior to a Tenth Meeting of the States Parties.”

As knowing the location, extent and quality of one’s implementation challenge is the basis for developing a meaningful plan for implementation and for mobilizing resources, it is remarkable that so much time has passed without this clarity having been obtained and reported. I am hopeful that we will receive reports on progress in this area during this week’s meeting of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance.

Victim assistance:

With respect to victim assistance, this really was the story of the Cartagena Summit. Our Convention has been ground breaking in establishing an intelligent, strategic approach to assisting the victims. This has since been embedded in the Convention on Cluster Munitions and is central to the work in this area in the CCW.

The strength of the Victim Assistance actions of the Cartagena Action Plan is the high level of engagement, competence and commitment by all partners of the Convention that lead to concrete and focused actions. They embody a decade of experience – successes and lessons learned – in this field. The humanitarian nature of this Convention called for such concrete and reachable goals. We know how we can translate the gains we have made into a meaningful difference in the lives of women, girls, boys and men who have fallen victim to mines.

The tasks are clear: We need to deepen national ownership, raise the priority given to disability at all levels, maintain a high degree of political will, improve coordination and collaboration at national level, include gender and diversity issues in our work and enhance international cooperation and assistance.

I would like to thank past and present participants, organizers and partners of the parallel programme on victim assistance for their untiring efforts in this regard.

Other matters important for achieving our aims:

Concerning other matters important to achieving our aims, a high priority for my Presidency is to reinvigorate international cooperation and assistance in the context of our Convention. It is clear that we need at least two distinct conversations – one that specifically targets Article 5 implementation and one that moves us forward on victim assistance. Friday of this week will feature a special session to explore questions related to each matter.

Concerning compliance, I would maintain that the measure of the success of our Convention should never be whether there are allegations of actions in contravention of the Convention's prohibitions. Concerns about compliance will arise in the context of any international instrument. This is not the measure of the strength of this Convention or any other instrument. Rather, the strength of our Convention rests in how individual States Parties respond to these allegations and provide clarity regarding any particular situation that arises.

In this regard, I can report that I have acted as my predecessors have by engaging relevant parties concerning compliance in accordance with Article 8.1.

Finally, on the matter of implementation support, collectively we have an important task this year in evaluating the Implementation Support Unit. I will report on this matter in more detail later at this meeting. However, let us not forget that in the midst of an evaluation – which will provide future direction for the ISU – we must also concern ourselves with the present situation as concerns the ISU. In the lead-up, during and since the Cartagena Summit we have seen that the ISU is indispensable. It is incumbent upon us all to act upon our Cartagena commitment to “provide necessary financial resources for the effective operation of the ISU.”

Conclusion:

Dear friends: In conclusion, the state of the Convention is good. But the ongoing health of this seminal instrument of international law requires an undying commitment to accept responsibility and continue to cooperate. Only then will we arrive at our destination – a conclusive end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.