



Delegation of the European Union

**Meetings of the Standing Committees of the
Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines
(Geneva, 21 – 25 June 2010)**

**Statement by
the European Union Delegation
on behalf of the European Union**

"Special Session on Cooperation and Assistance"

Geneva, 25 June 2010

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**EU Statement at the
Special Session on Cooperation and Assistance
(25 June 2010)**

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

The EU welcomes the outcome of the Second Review Conference of the Convention in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) from 29 November to 4 December 2009, and especially the document “A shared Commitment for a Mine-Free World: The 2009 Cartagena Declaration” in support of the Convention and its goals. Together with the “Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014”, we now have an agreed basis to guide us in our fight against antipersonnel landmines and their effects for the next five years.

We are mindful of the tremendous humanitarian and development challenges still posed by anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa Convention has, of course, helped enormously since 1999 the achievement of our objectives. Nonetheless, anti-personnel mines continue to kill or harm people; they constitute an obstacle to the return of refugees and other displaced persons; they hinder humanitarian aid operations; they hamper reconstruction and economic development; and they militate against the restoration of normal social and economic conditions for development. They thus have serious and lasting effects on the populations of mine-affected countries, and they pose moral and political issues, which the EU believes should guide us in our practical endeavours to implement the criteria set by the Ottawa Convention.

We share the overall goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines with what we in the EU have called our objective of a ‘zero victims’ practical target. Our aim is twofold: no new mine victims and the provision of sustainable assistance to landmine victims worldwide. The EU welcomes the overall decrease in the number of new mine victims. Yet, the need for assistance and tangible improvements to the lives of victims remains. As we stated in Cartagena, the EU believes that it is only by integrating mine action into the development agenda that we can ensure sustainable results. This is important - not least regarding victim assistance.

We should also bear in mind that an increasing number of victims today are caused by mines laid by non-state actors. We believe this issue requires considerable further reflection and action by States parties.

¹ * *Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

Full compliance with mine clearance obligations of the Convention remains a persistent challenge for many States Parties. The EU and its Member States are aware of the complexity of the tasks involved. But, we stand ready to provide assistance to States parties in their efforts to enhance and implement effectively their national plans, both to comply with the Convention and to ensure synergies under other international instruments pertinent in different countries.

The financial support provided by the European Union - by which we mean the combined efforts of European institutions and EU Member States - to mine action clearly illustrates our commitment to a world free of anti-personnel mines. The total EU funding over the last ten years of over 1,8 billion Euros is almost half the world's financial assistance to mine action in that period.

In 2009, the contribution from the budget of the EU alone for co-operation and assistance to mine action exceeded 30,8 million Euros in support of the following countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Nepal, Occupied Palestinian Territories/Gaza, Pakistan and Ukraine. In addition, in 2010 to-date the EU has committed 40 million Euros to a number of projects in Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Awareness and universalisation of the Convention remains one of the most important priorities for the European Union. In support of this objective, the European Union has contributed over the past two years over one million Euros through a project implemented by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) hosted by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The results have been excellent, but while we wish to thank all those who made it a success, especially the staff of the GICHD and the ISU, we realise that there is still necessary and important work to be done.

The previous EU universalisation project expired in May 2010. We are currently in the process of defining, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, the main features and activity areas of a new Council Decision in support of the Convention; this time focussing on the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan - victim assistance, compliance with mine clearance commitments and universalisation efforts. By the end of 2010 we intend to have in place a new cycle of activities to support the implementation of these key commitments made by States Parties at the Cartagena Summit.

Madam Chair,

The ISU has been of crucial importance in the effective management of all aspects of the implementation of the Ottawa Convention. We are grateful to the GICHD for providing a highly professional evaluation of all mine action undertaken by the EU in previous years. So, in concluding, we would like to thank the ISU for their important work as well as the GICHD for its continued logistic, administrative and technical support to the ISU. We also take this opportunity to thank the Swiss Government in particular for its extensive funding of the GICHD operational budget.

I thank you, Madam Chair.
