

Press Release



AP Mine Ban Convention meeting opens with a focus on the victims

Geneva, 29 November 2010 – The Tenth Meeting of the States Parties (10MSP) of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention began today, with a renewed commitment to assist survivors and eliminate the blight of landmines globally.

Albania, a country with a significant number of landmine survivors and one which in 2009 declared the clearance of all known minefields, took over the presidency of the Convention.

“Albania inherited millions of stockpiled anti-personnel mines that needed to be destroyed and had to clear significant parts of the country that were littered with mines and other explosive hazards as a result of the conflict in Kosovo,” said Gazmand Turdiu, President of the Convention.

“Although we knew we would have significant challenges implementing the terms of the Convention, we joined this global movement because we were committed to ending an unnecessary human tragedy – at home and around the world,” added Turdiu.

In a show of commitment to the landmine cause, Micheline Calmy-Rey, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland - which is hosting the meeting - joined the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC, in the 10MSP's opening ceremony.

International and non-governmental organizations were also well represented at the opening of the meeting, including through the participation of over 100 activists from the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

Survivors call on more States to join the Convention

Daniel Yuval, an 11-year-old landmine survivor from Israel also addressed the opening plenary of the 10MSP on behalf of survivors everywhere.

Yuval recounted waking up from his first operation after a landmine explosion in the Golan Heights took his right leg and left his sister temporarily blind.

“When I woke up from my first operation, I told my parents that I wanted to make sure that no other child would get hurt by landmines again. When Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu called me in the hospital, I told him that we had to do something to clean up the landmines in Israel.”

Asked why he decided to come to Geneva to participate in the 10MSP, the 11-year-old responded: “I wanted the world to know that there are landmines in Israel,” he said.

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Jerry White, International Chair for the Campaign for a Mine-Free Middle East, said that they are building peace “from the ground up. Daniel’s leadership is waking up Israel to an unrecognized terror threat.”

White a landmine survivor who also lost his leg to a mine explosion in the Golan Heights 26 years ago, said Israel could be “free of landmines within ten years for \$70-80 million. Jordan has proven it can be done, having already cleared all the minefields along the Jordanian-Israeli border.”

Israel is one of 39 States that have not joined the Convention.

WHO and partners launch guidelines aimed at empowering those with disabilities

The WHO, the ILO, UNESCO and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) are using a 10MSP parallel programme for landmine victim assistance experts as the European launch for their Community Based Rehabilitation Guidelines (CBR).

"The CBR Guidelines are an important tool to ensure that community development programmes are inclusive of persons with disabilities and that the benefits of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities reach all disabled people including victims of landmines," said Alana Officer, Coordinator at the WHO.

According to Diane Mulligan, Programme Development Advisor at Sightsavers, the IDDC and its partners across Africa, Asia and Latin America have contributed to the development of the Guidelines. “We are now rising to the challenge of implementing a fundamental shift toward a multi-sectoral approach involving all parts of government in partnership with people with disabilities, their families and communities.”

The AP Mine Ban Convention is the first multilateral arms control or disarmament agreement to address the humanitarian needs of the victims of specific weapons systems. The framework for victim assistance developed in the context of the Convention is applicable to assisting not only landmine survivors but also all persons with disabilities.

The experts' programme, sponsored by Australia, continues until 2 December and seeks to empower not only the survivors but also others with disabilities.

The AP Mine Ban Convention was adopted in Oslo and opened for signature in Ottawa in 1997; it entered into force in 1999. To date 156 States have joined the Convention.

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