

Universalization

Statement by HRH Prince Mired Raad Al Hussein of Jordan

Special Envoy on the Universalization of the AP Mine Ban Convention

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It has been an honour to serve again as the President's Special Envoy on Universalization.

In Cartagena, we agreed that "attracting further adherents to the Convention has grown more difficult in recent years implying that future efforts to promote acceptance of the Convention and its norms will require intensive effort at as high a level as possible."

Turning our words into deeds is the responsibility of us all. In this regard, it is a pleasure to report to you on what I have done this year.

As I reported in June, in April of this year, I carried out a universalization mission to the Republic of Korea.

In carrying out this mission, I was certainly not naïve to the Republic of Korea's profound security concerns. However, I carried out this mission equally well aware that Korea is a modern, progressive nation that has a great appreciation for international humanitarian norms.

As such, I sought to explore ways that South Korea may wish to engage in the work of the Convention and to more generally discuss the humanitarian problems caused by anti-personnel mines.

In Seoul, I met with the Deputy Minister for Policy of the Ministry of National Defense, the Deputy Minister of Multilateral and Global Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chief of the High Court of the Korean Armed Forces and the Ambassador of the USA to the Republic of Korea.

In addition, I met with representatives of the Korean Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Korean Red Cross Society.

Also in South Korea, I visited the Demilitarized Zone where I met with the heads of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission.

The mission was important in that a State Not Party that has not been directly engaged on the landmine issue for several years – perhaps for more than a decade – is again on notice that there is a strong desire that it eventually accede to the Convention.

Also during the first half of this year, I made yet another attempt to visit Nepal.

Given the commitment to clear all mines in Nepal, I was hopeful that Nepal was prepared to engage in a discussion on accepting, as we have, a ban on any future use of anti-personnel mines.

Unfortunately, this may not be the case. Despite the best efforts of the United Nations to make arrangements for a visit, the Nepalese leadership did not appear to be ready to engage.

In August, I traveled to Tuvalu where I met with the Governor General, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Justice and others.

I was impressed by how warmly I was received by the Government and its people of Tuvalu. I will never forget having travelled to one of the world's smallest countries, and to see that regardless of size, all States of the world have an interest in ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.

Even before I departed Tuvalu, the Prime Minister informed me that his Government has taken the decision to accede to the Convention. The Prime Minister delivered on his commitment to me, ensuring that Tuvalu's instrument of accession was deposited in September, thus seeing that Tuvalu had become the 157th State to join our movement.

Also on my mission to Tuvalu, I spent a day in Suva, Fiji, where I met with the Heads of Mission of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. My message to both was that I truly would like to engage them as well and that they are welcome to participate in the work of this Convention even while their accession deliberations continue.

I am extremely pleased that the FSM have sent a high level congressional delegation to the 11MSP and I hope that this delegation reports back that we sincerely want the FSM to become part of the movement and that we are here to also discuss how we could support coordinated action on UXO problems in the Pacific.

Also, while I was in Suva, I met with the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to offer my support for the Pacific's regional landmines and UXO strategy and to suggest that the PIF Secretariat may benefit from ongoing collaboration with the ISU in supporting States in the Pacific.

In addition, I met with universalization partners in Suva, including Australia, New Zealand and the ICRC and I encouraged Fiji as well to play a role in the pursuit of this aim in the region and beyond. In this regard, I am pleased that Fiji has sent a delegation to the 11MSP.

In October, I carried out a mission to Tonga and was well received by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Acting Chief of Tonga's Defence Forces and other leaders. As with respect to all my visits, in Tonga I also engaged civil society, particularly the Tongan Red Cross Society.

Tonga's leadership expressed strong support for accession to the Convention and I am hopeful that it too will join our movement.

As His Excellency the Belgian Ambassador mentioned, I was also very hopeful that I would visit Sri Lanka in November, to engage the leadership on Universalization. Unfortunately, this visit did not come about as it was postponed till next year.

Excellencies, dear friends: as I mentioned yesterday, I am willing to continue high level engagement if the States Parties deem this important. But also as I mentioned yesterday, I would urge other States Parties to assist in this endeavour in whatever way possible – if we realistically want to see some good results.

In closing, I must thank the President of the 10MSP for having entrusted me to serve as his High Level Envoy and, most of all, the Government of Norway for having supported my high level universalization efforts over the past two years.

My thanks also goes to the ISU, which, in keeping with its mandate “to provide advice and technical support to States Parties (...) on Universalization”, has been instrumental in assisting me and supporting other States Parties that engage in Universalization on a regular basis.