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Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

13th Meeting of States Parties

General Exchange of Views

2 December 2013



Statement by

AUSTRIA

Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi

**Permanent Representative of Austria
to the United Nations in Geneva**

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to warmly congratulate you on your election and assure you and your team the full support of my delegation. I would also like to take this opportunity and express my gratitude to the outgoing President, Amb. Matjaž Kovačič of Slovenia, for the excellent manner in which he steered our work.

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement by the European Union delivered earlier during this exchange. Let me in the following add a few remarks from a national point of view.

It is with appreciation that Austria notes the accession of Poland to the Convention. We are pleased that for the first time today all EU member states participate as states parties to an annual meeting of this Treaty. We express our sincere appreciation to all stakeholders that have taken particular leadership in universalization efforts and call on all states not yet party to join the Treaty without any further delay. We also welcome states that participate in this conference as signatories and observers.

Mr. President,

We are mindful of our own responsibility as a State Party to the Convention in accordance with our commitment to the Cartagena Action Plan to *„seize every opportunity to promote and encourage adherence to the norms of the Convention”* and *“to condemn and continue to discourage in every possible way any production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines by any actor”*.

Austria condemns any use of anti-personnel mines. Austria's Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister, Michael Spindelegger, in a press release this morning expressed his great concern about confirmed use and allegations of use regarding the states parties Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan and Turkey. Austria appreciates the efforts already undertaken by these states parties to fully clarify cases of use or allegations of use and we look forward to receiving more detailed information from these states during this week.

The obligation to protect civilians from unnecessary harm applies to all states. Austria's Foreign Minister today reiterated his call to states not yet party to the Mine Ban Treaty to refrain from any use of anti-personnel mines, in particular Syria and Myanmar. These weapons are internationally shunned because they pose an acute danger to the civilian population even decades after hostilities have ended. A norm has emerged from the shared understanding in the international community that the only response to the indiscriminate and inhuman nature of anti-personnel mines is their total ban.

Mr. President,

Tomorrow marks the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. Not only on this day it is important to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and remove the barriers that still exist in society today. The mine ban community has been making an important contribution to strengthening the rights of survivors, affected families and communities. Here, the tireless efforts of survivors and their representative organizations and the NGO community at large have always played a key role.

Targeted victim assistance measures, development programs as well as measures to ensure the respect of the rights of victims have all contributed to progress in this area. However, serious challenges remain in order to ensure that victims receive adequate assistance that meets their needs and rights, including in the areas of data collection and needs assessment, psychological support, access to services in remote areas and social and economic integration. Austria and Colombia as Co-Chairs for Victim Assistance have during this year put a particular focus on the needs of children and families as victims and highlighted the requirements for age- and gender-sensitive assistance.

Mr. President,

We welcome the recent announcements by states parties that have declared themselves as mine free, we commend them for their efforts and achievements, and we hope to hear more such news in the near future. We are concerned by the high number of extension requests for mine clearance deadlines. States Parties must do their best to respect the 10 year deadline. Extension requests should clearly be the exemption and not the rule. The obligation of the Treaty to destroy all stockpiles remains to be fulfilled by a small number of states. We are confident that states parties with outstanding clearance and stockpile destruction obligations will put even higher priority and ambition to finishing their obligations in accordance with the Treaty. The reporting of states parties on the implementation of the provisions of the Mine Ban Treaty is key transparency measure and also a prerequisite for effective and targeted cooperation and assistance. We join the coordinator of the Article 7 Contact Group in his call to states parties to improve and strengthen their reporting under Article 7.

All these issues corroborate that the 3rd Review Conference in 2014 will offer a decisive opportunity for the Mine Ban community to address the remaining challenges and agree on ways to further strengthen this Treaty and fulfill its provisions in a timely, efficient and cooperative manner. We are looking forward to the Conference in Maputo with great expectations.

I thank you.