

The HALO Trust – 16 MSP General Statement in Plenary

Mister President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

At this 20th Anniversary Meeting of States Parties, The HALO Trust would like to pay tribute to the dedication and persistence of the inspiring alliance of states, civil society and organisations that has made this one of the most successful international treaties of our time. We also welcome Sri Lanka's accession to the treaty.

A huge amount has been achieved since the treaty was signed: the anti-personnel landmine has been internationally stigmatized and twenty-nine countries have completed the clearance of all known mined areas, including Mozambique, which was once one of the most heavily mine affected countries in the world. Across the world mine clearance has acted as a catalyst for development and millions of people have been able to return to their homes and are able to cultivate their land without the fear of dying or losing a limb.

But while we have much to celebrate, we are not here to congratulate ourselves. We are here to make good on the commitment that was made twenty years ago in Ottawa, at the signing of the Treaty, to put an end to the suffering caused by landmines. Further to that commitment, in 2014 in Maputo, states committed to "clear all mined areas as soon as possible" and to the fullest extent possible by 2025, unequivocally stating that "the completion of our mine clearance obligations is within reach".

There are still over 60 countries waiting to be cleared, and only 3 states parties are on track to meet their clearance deadlines. While HALO's 8,100 staff conduct clearance of mines and other explosive remnants of war across 23 countries and territories, we are witnessing a decline in funding in some of the most highly contaminated countries. Countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Zimbabwe will require a significant increase in funding if they are to meet their clearance deadlines. The equation is at first glance simple: the more resources we apply to the task the more land we can release to productive use. The completion of Mozambique demonstrates what can be achieved with the consistent application of effort, commitment and sustained funding. But nothing in life is ever simple and with limited resources, we need to be clearer about priorities and be more willing to accept risk.

Achieving this relies on donors, affected states and civil society to work together, in the spirit in which this treaty was created. Such a new approach can only be achieved with commitment, cooperation and partnership. The goal of a mine free 2025 is within reach for some of the world's most contaminated countries, but this requires a re-focussing of funding and renewed commitment from donors, affected states and civil society on those countries to finish the job.

Mr President, we must remember that people are and should remain at the centre of everything we do. Over 60 million people are still affected by mines and other explosive remnants of war. As states work towards their treaty obligations, it is essential to put affected communities first, ensuring that mine clearance in each country is prioritised based on humanitarian and socio-economic need.

Ultimately history will judge us on the extent to which we have made good on our commitments. It can be done, but with only 8 years to go this is the year states must recommit to the 2025 goal. It is up to all of us in this room to not let those 60 million people be forgotten.

Thank you.