

16th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention
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Statements of the Kingdom of Belgium
on the thematic matters in agenda item 11.

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(universalization)

Belgium congratulates **Sri Lanka** for its adhesion last week to the Ottawa Convention. This news comes while we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Convention. This a step forward in the universalization. As the 163rd State Party, Sri Lanka will surely contribute to the promotion of the objectives of the Convention in the region.

Since 1997 the impact of the Convention has been extremely important as 163 countries have acceded to the Convention : the use and the production of anti-personnel mines has decreased dramatically, millions of mines have been destroyed by the State Parties and demining has resulted in millions of square meters of once dangerous land being cleared for human activity.

I would like to **commend the demarches** made by the Austrian Presidency and his actions in the framework of the informal working group on universalization working group.

My country continues to campaign for the **universalization** of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We have seized in 2017 every opportunity to approach Non States Parties, **namely in the Middle East and in South-East Asia**, inviting them to join the Convention as soon as possible.

Further work remains to be done in order to give the Convention the universal character needed to achieve its goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines, a weapon whose use is no longer accepted by the international community, due to their devastating effects on the civilian population and the long lasting effects on the development of whole regions.

The new EU Council decision in support of the implementation of the Maputo Action Plan will be in this respect useful in support of the Presidency of the Convention and its High level Task Force supported by the ISU.