



4th Review Conference

MINE FREE WORLD

OSLO NORWAY 25-29 Nov 2019

Statement by Ambassador Hans Brattskar, Permanent Representative of Norway, 30 November 2018, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Thank you, Ambassador Dalil.

I would like to thank you for your inspiring leadership of the Convention over the past year. The importance of having Afghanistan, one of the most heavily mine-affected countries in the world, assuming the responsibility to lead the Mine Ban Convention cannot be overstated. It is an honour to succeed you and to be able to build on your efforts. I would also like to thank all delegations present for the confidence expressed in Norway by electing me to preside over the Fourth Review Conference.

Let me start by reminding all of us that the Mine Ban Convention is one of the most successful multilateral disarmament treaties of recent times. We are 164 States Parties, and a thriving network of international organizations and civil society actors, who work towards the shared goal of a mine free world. The Convention has established a strong norm against *any* use of landmines. This norm is adhered to by many more than just the States Parties. 51 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed, and vast areas have been successfully cleared or released to communities. The rights of victims and survivors have been recognized and assistance has been provided to many. This is truly a great achievement.

Norway has been a staunch supporter of this Convention since it was adopted in Oslo in 1997. We have been a donor of global mine action for 25 years. It is not the first time we are president of this Convention. As we take on this role again, you will find that we are consistent. We have stayed on message. But as president, I wish to work with all of you to bring *new energy* and enthusiasm into the implementation of this Convention.

Norway takes over the presidency after a year where landmines and explosive remnants of war caused more than 7000 registered deaths and injuries. Each victim is one too many. These stark numbers remind us of what our joint purpose as a mine ban community is: to put an end to the human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines. Landmines are indiscriminate by nature. Landmines continue to kill and injure long after a conflict has ended. It was precisely such concerns that brought about the Convention in the first place. Many established norms are currently under pressure. It is our duty to protect them and to address new challenges. We must keep these perspectives front and centre as we prepare for the 4th Review Conference.

I also aim to use our presidency to bring renewed *political attention* to the Mine Ban Convention. The Maputo goal of a mine free world by 2025 remains our objective and rallying cry. Next year's Review Conference provides an opportunity to refocus our efforts and to make a plan for the *achievement* of the objectives of the Convention. We will need the support of a larger number of states to reach our common goals. Currently a small number of countries represent more than 70% of all funding for global mine action. We would like to see many more become donors.

Let me now outline some key priorities for this presidency.



As long as landmines are in the ground, they continue to kill and maim. We must increase the pace of survey and clearance. We should make maximum use of the lessons learned over the past two decades of mine clearance, putting to use the latest technology and methods for effective land release. We know that identifying *confirmed hazardous areas* and developing realistic completion plans for clearance are key steps for a country to become mine-free.

We are concerned about the large number of extension requests, including *recurring* requests in many cases.

As 2025 moves closer, we would like the global mine action community to come together to make clear, concrete, country specific and time-bound plans for how each country will become mine-free. The individualized approach established by this Convention is an important tool in this regard. We also wish to encourage in-country based dialogues between national authorities, operators and donors, and the establishment of formalized mine action forums where relevant. We have found that the establishment of a real dialogue between all stakeholders in mine action at country level can improve clearance performance considerably.

Two states parties still have stockpile destruction obligations. We intend to have a close dialogue with these states. And we would like to challenge all states parties currently holding stockpiles of landmines for training purposes, in accordance with Article 3. It is quite possible to substitute live mines with training mines for training purposes

Landmines are not a problem of the past. Over the past few years, improvised landmines have again been used as tools of war, mostly by armed non-state actors. While improvised landmines themselves are not a new concept, the scale of the problem is. We must rise to the challenge and jointly develop our understanding of how to tackle this issue. Let me be clear: anti-personnel mines are prohibited and fall under the obligations of this Convention, independent of whether they are *manufactured* or *improvised*. We should also explore how we can strengthen the norm against any use of landmines among armed *non-state actors*. This will require coordinated efforts and dedicated resources from the international community. We must address new contamination through effective mine action, while not losing sight of legacy contamination.

With the high number of casualties over the past years in mind, we see an urgent need to focus more on prevention and on effective mine risk education. Ongoing conflicts and large groups of internally displaced persons and refugees make effective risk education a challenge – but also highlight why targeted messages are sorely needed. We believe more can be done to standardize and improve the relevance, quality as well as the gender sensitivity of mine risk education. As presidency, we wish to engage on this issue in the year to come.

When all landmines have been cleared and all stockpiles have been destroyed, *landmine victims* and survivors will still have to live with the legacy of landmines for the rest of their lives. This Convention has been instrumental in recognizing the rights of landmine survivors, and persons living with disabilities in general. Still, many persons with disabilities do not have access to health services, to education and to employment opportunities. Our joint aim is to ensure that victims of landmines can enjoy their full rights and place in society. As we move towards the Review Conference, we hope to develop more clarity on what could and should be the responsibility of states parties.

I would like to reiterate that a gender perspective will underlie all our efforts as president. Through the consultations that we have carried out since June, I have found there is broad agreement that the Mine Ban Convention should be implemented in a gender sensitive way. Nevertheless, we still have some way to go in converting this understanding into action that is mainstreamed across all parts of this Convention. I will do my part to ensure that mine action is relevant to men, women, girls and boys alike, and will seek your input and suggestions on how the entire sector can step up to this challenge during the next year.

As president, I intend to be a strong and ambitious *advocate* for the Convention. It is a particular responsibility of the president to promote universalization of the Convention and its norm. It is the responsibility of all states parties to remind the world that landmines are indiscriminate and inhuman weapons. This can help further stigmatise and reduce use, and promote protection.

Having outlined some of our priorities, let me now share some thoughts on the process leading up to the 4th Review Conference. We look forward to welcoming you to Oslo in November next year for the Review Conference. It is our aim to use the Review Conference to bring renewed attention to the Convention in all capitals. I invite you to contribute actively in the preparations for the new five-year action plan to be adopted in Oslo. To this end, I will consult extensively with states parties, civil society, landmine survivors, the UN and other international organizations over the next year. This is in line with the well-established partnership approach in the Convention. I will be travelling to mine-affected countries, to ensure that we have a clear perspective from the field in our work. We will have a formal preparatory meeting during the intersessional meetings in Geneva in May next year. A second preparatory meeting will take place in September. Our aim is to build on the strong foundation from the Maputo Action Plan and ensure that the challenges and opportunities of today are reflected in the new action plan.

I wish to emphasize that my door – and the door of every member of my team– will always be open. We stand ready to listen to your concerns and ideas and to learn from your experience. To make this as simple as possible we have established an electronic open door: an email address where you can reach us MineBan@mfa.no.

The objectives of the Convention - to save lives, protect civilians, assist victims and to enable sustainable development in affected areas - are as relevant as ever. I encourage all states parties, international organizations and members of civil society to get onboard the Landmine Free 2025 campaign. When we meet next year in Oslo we have the opportunity to influence the course of implementation in a way that will make a real difference towards 2025. I look forward to working with all of you in the year to come.

Thank you!