



Norway

Statement to the Fifth Meeting of State Parties to the
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling,
Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their
Destruction

by

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Thank you, Mr President

We want to congratulate you, your excellency Foreign Minister Dr. Surakiart, on your election as President of the fifth Meeting of States Parties. We highly appreciate the Kingdom of Thailand's willingness to host the annual meeting of states parties in a severely mine-affected region, and the first to take place in Asia. We hope this meeting will stimulate more Asian countries to ratify or accede to the Mine Ban Convention.

We would certainly also like to thank the president of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties, Ambassador Jean Lint, for his dedicated and excellent work over the last year. He has brought this important process a long step forward and kept us all focussed on the core humanitarian objectives of the Mine Ban Convention. In particular, we appreciate what he has done to lay the ground for our preparations of the Convention's first Review Conference.

Mr President,

At this fifth Meeting of States Parties and four and a half years after the entry into force of the Mine Ban Convention, there is much to celebrate. At the same time we all realise that much remains to be done and we have still not passed the final test; the total and global eradication of anti-personnel mines. But we should have learned through the Ottawa process that even the most daunting problems can be solved when governments and civil society work together towards a common objective.

Mr President,

At the fourth meeting of States Parties last year, Norway initiated the establishment of a Contact Group on Resource Mobilisation. This group has met during the intersessional period. The aim is to promote adequate funding for mine action and, in particular, the best possible utilisation of resources available for mine action.

The Landmine Monitor 2003 reports that mine action funding increased significantly from 2001 to 2002. That is indeed very positive. However, it will be a huge challenge to sustain funding for mine action in the years to come. But figures are not all. It is increasingly important to address how to make the most of scarce human and financial resources.

Sensible resource utilisation requires that states are committed to the obligations of the Mine Ban Convention. National ownership of mine action and mine victim assistance is crucial. Mine affected countries must assess their own needs and define their own priorities. Sharing knowledge and experience among mine-affected countries constitutes a resource in itself and should be further enhanced. To make better use of resources, we need to be better co-ordinated at the country level. We should improve the co-operation between national and local authorities, field operators and donors.

Mine action should be further integrated into the broader development agenda. In mine-affected areas mine action must be an integral part of the efforts towards poverty reduction and sustainable development. Mine Action is often part of conflict resolution, peace and reconciliation. Mine Action is a very manifest and practical way of demonstrating that peace pays off.

As mine action gets further integrated into other areas, we might not be able to measure the funding as easily as today. The most important measure of the success of our work is, however, whether there are fewer new mine victims, whether we take properly care of the survivors, and how much mine contaminated land we have been able to clear of mines and return to productive use.

Mr President,

The landmines out in the fields continue to cause large number of casualties each year. The overwhelming majority of the victims are innocent civilians. When the land is cleared, the survivors will still be in need of help. We must more strongly emphasise their need to be re-integrated in their societies. Mine victim assistance is and should be integrated into other rehabilitation and medical measures. We will make use of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and social and economic reintegration to address this issue and continue the dialogue with survivors and affected communities.

Mr President,

I have already referred to the Landmine Monitor. This publication continues to each year provide a useful and reliable overview of the landmine situation worldwide. I can confirm Norway's continued support for and contribution to Landmine Monitor and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. We will continue our close co-operation with important actors as the ICBL, ICRC and various practitioners in the field. May I also express our gratitude for the tremendous contributions made by the GICHD and the ISU in making the work under this Convention more efficient and effective.

Mr President,

We have encouraged NGOs and practitioners in the field to make use of the intersessional work programme. These intersessional meetings serve as an important inter-face between the realities on the ground and the political work in Geneva and the capitals. We do not want to take the practitioners away from their important work in the field, but it is essential to realise that our efforts take place in a political context. There is an ongoing need to inform those deciding on policies and allocation of funds in capitals. We are therefore pleased to note that over the last year, more practitioners and field operators seem to have participated in the intersessional meetings in Geneva. In addition, we find that the overall quality of the intersessional meetings and the work of the Standing Committees has improved significantly since the establishment of the ISU.

Mr President,

The first Review Conference of the Convention will be a mile-stone in the life of the Convention. The Review Conference must take stock of what has been achieved during the first five years of the Mine Ban Convention. It will be equally important to hammer out a vision and a practical plan of action for the next five years in order to realise our political and legal obligations and humanitarian objectives.

We find it most appropriate that this first Review Conference takes place in Africa. Not only is Africa a severely mine-affected continent. African countries have also played a determining role in the making of this Convention. When we later this week

will formally decide on the date, venue, presidency and preparatory process, we are confident that we will have the necessary means to prepare for a good conference.

Mr President,

We look forward to the next days of meeting under your able guidance. We expect that this week in Bangkok will provide good support for our practical work over the next year.

Mr President,

This Convention was born in response to a humanitarian crisis. We must remember that in spite of the successes of the Convention and the Ottawa process, the tragedies caused by anti-personnel mines are still among the most important humanitarian issues of our time. I can assure you, Mr President, that Norway is committed to continue to support politically and financially the fulfilling of the objectives of the Mine Ban Convention.

Thank you, Mr President