

Statement of Ambassador Jean Lint

At the Opening Ceremony of the 6th Meeting of the States Parties (Zagreb, November 27, 2005)

M. President,
M. Mayor,
Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues and friends of the Convention,

It is a great pleasure and a nice feeling to be again with you today, here in Zagreb. I would like to express my thanks to the Croatian authorities for having offered to host the annual meeting of the States Parties showing by that their involvement in the task of ridding the world of anti-personnel landmines.

My gratitude goes to Mrs Dijana Plestina for having invited me to this opening ceremony and given me the opportunity to make some brief remarks on the eve of the 6MSP.

My thanks also go to all those who made out of the Nairobi Summit a success, which was due among others to the excellent cooperation of Thailand, Kenya and our President, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria.

Today, I would like to concentrate on universality. **Qualitative and quantitative universality**, with a background of urgency for the States parties to fulfil their obligations and for the States still outside the Convention to feel the humanitarian pressure to join it.

The deadlines for the **qualitative universality** are short for us, States Parties. Article 7 reports have a yearly deadline, stockpile destruction a four year deadline, mine clearance a ten year deadline and victim assistance no deadline but a lot of resources needed. I would like to urge the governments of all State Parties to show the necessary political will so that all these targets can be met, not forgetting the putting into place of a national legislation that would leave no loopholes in the process. Prominence should also be given to a coherent approach covering all mines aspects. While addressing needs, international assistance and financial resources must seek to foster sustainability and local ownership in the affected countries

With regards to the **quantitative universality**, **147 States** have now accepted the Convention, that is 76 % of the world's States, with the highest rate of adherence per continent in Europe (95 %), Africa (92 %) the Americas (91 %) and the Pacific region (62 %). From the original 133 States, which signed the Convention, only 7 have not yet ratified it and are expected to do so in a foreseeable future. 40 States still have to accede to the Convention.

In Europe, all States are parties to the Convention except for two, which have indicated their willingness to join soon. That is anyway what can be concluded from the fact that both co-sponsored the recent resolution at the First Committee of the General Assembly last month, which is inviting all States that have not signed the Convention to accede to it without delay and urging all States that have signed but not ratified the Convention to ratify it without delay.

I take this opportunity to call upon the Presidency of the European Union to act with respect to the only two European states still outside of the Convention.

In my present function at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I am in charge of the 48 African countries south of Sahara. In that respect, I am happy to see that 47 out of them are parties to the Convention, with the exception of Somalia.

I can also tell you that last week, my Minister of Foreign affairs met with the Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal government of Somalia. During that meeting, the Prime Minister declared that once the government and Parliament are fully operational, accession to the Convention belongs to their priorities.

If quantitative universality is almost complete in that region, huge efforts are still needed in the qualitative universality (mine clearance, victim assistance and national legislation). Those elements will certainly be addressed during this conference.

As stated in the draft Zagreb progress report, three regions of the world are still lagging behind: Asia, the Middle East and the countries part of the CIS. In this relation, I am encouraged by the fact that 23 States not yet parties to the Convention voted in favour of the UN resolution in New York and among them, seven from Asia, six from the Middle East and four from the CIS. All efforts should be made to ensure that in not a too distant future up to **170 States** join the Convention.

In this respect, I would like to call on all my colleagues of the States Parties to see that our ministers of foreign affairs in their bilateral consultations with countries not yet in the Convention put the item of universality of the Convention on the agenda of their meetings. This would add to the efforts deployed by Canada and the Universalization Contact Group, the ICBL, the ICRC and the United Nations.

I would also like to repeat my call of Bangkok on the remaining Permanent Members of the Security Council that are outside of the Convention to show that they have a special responsibility to provide some leadership in universalizing the Convention; in that respect, I welcome the yes vote of China on the resolution. It is rewarding to see that the majority of the permanent members of the Security Council have now for the first time voted in favour of the Convention.

To conclude, I would like to reaffirm that there is no such thing as a responsible use of anti-personnel landmines and that there are no such things as “smart mines” or “dumb mines”. There are only indiscriminate, cruel and inhumane anti-personnel mines, which destroy the lives of thousands of innocent civilian victims each year. It is for them that we are all here. We know the problem and we have the solution. Let us join our efforts to continue to save lives and limbs by finishing our job of ridding the world of anti-personnel mines as soon as possible.

On the part of my country, I can state that Belgium will spare no efforts to promote the Universality on the Convention in all relevant fora.

I wish you a fruitful conference in Zagreb.