

## NCDR Chairman's Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the 8MSP

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Your Royal Highness Prince Raad bin Zeid...His Majesty King Abdullah II's representative to this event,  
Your Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium,  
Your Royal Highnesses,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me as the President Designate of the 8MSP and as the Chairman of the Board of the Jordanian 'National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation' to say a few words about our hopes and aspirations for our presidency that will last until November 2008, and to convey our thanks, our deep admiration and gratitude towards all our partners in mine action who have been instrumental and supportive of our endeavors over the years.

The idea that Jordan should bid to host the 8MSP was first floated among the Jordanian delegation during the First Review Conference in Nairobi in 2004. I must say that I personally was initially resistant to the idea because of the enormity of the challenge; however, in time I came to realize that the idea made a

great deal of sense. Since the 'meeting of states parties' had never convened in the Middle East, and the fact that this region of the world is one of the most mine polluted, yet least represented in the Mine Ban Convention, all added to my growing belief that it ought to happen in Jordan. I then proposed the idea to H.M. King Abdullah, who without the slightest bit of hesitation said, 'Great idea...go for it!' And 'voila'...here we are today.

I would very much like to thank His Majesty King Abdullah for his wholehearted support for Jordan's mine action endeavors. Without His Majesty's backing we would not have enjoyed the success that we have had so far. It has made us realize and appreciate the vital importance of leadership, political will and ownership in mine action. Since mine action is a very broad and complex matter that involves numerous stakeholders, from the survivor, to the deminer, the 'national authority,' the military, all the various ministries and government bodies...all the way down to the local mayors and tribal elders, as well as local and international NGOs, the UN, the ICRC, the donor countries and organizations, etc., etc....it is imperative that all these entities 'sing from the same sheet of music.' Basically what I am trying to say is that 'mine action' is difficult and complicated but most of all it is not impossible. It can be done. Of course...many mine affected countries have huge

numbers of landmines and capacities to deal with them vary, in addition to other formidable challenges as well...we all realize this. However, it can be done...one must not lose faith. Landmines are after all a man made problem that can be dealt with if enough time, serious effort, planning and resources are dedicated to it.

I don't mean to say by any stretch of imagination that our effort in Jordan has been perfect in any way. On the contrary...we have had our share of frustrations and difficulties in the past. There are many things that I wish we had done differently or had done better. The one thing however, that I must say we have managed to do is to focus, to persevere and to dream of a Jordan without landmines.

Your Royal Highnesses,  
Ladies & Gentlemen,

Your presence here today is a great honour for all Jordanian landmine survivors, deminers, and for all those who work in this arena. You have given Jordan's mine action endeavor a tremendous boost, which we hope to build upon in the years to come. What is also of great significance is the message, that your presence here by the Dead Sea, is sending to the countries of the Middle East and beyond that 'mine action' is a subject that

deserves immediate attention. For those countries not yet 'on the bandwagon,' especially those that are mine affected, I strongly urge you to reconsider your positions and to join our common cause as soon as possible. Time is not in your favour. In the past ten years donor countries have shown tremendous generosity towards mine affected states. The challenge as I see it in the next ten years will be how to keep them engaged, especially with the onslaught of so many other needy and worthy causes. It is in a sense a race against time.

Your Royal Highnesses,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies & Gentlemen,

On behalf of Jordan's 'National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation' the organizing body of this event and its 8MSP Jordan team, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Abdullah for his patronage of this ceremony. I also thank the Jordanian Government, the Armed Forces, the Security and all local NGOs for their great effort in making this event a reality. In addition, I must thank the 7MSP President, Ambassador Caroline Millar of Australia, for her invaluable support and guidance over this last year. I also convey my sincerest thanks to all the donor countries

and sponsors that have helped us with the hosting of the 8MSP. We are forever indebted to you. I must also acknowledge and thank the magician of the MBC who makes everything happen with ease, the Executive Coordinator of the 8MSP Mr. Kerry Brinkert, the head of the Implementation Support Unit for his indispensable support and drive. In addition I would like to thank the Executive Secretary Mr. Tim Caughley and Mr. Peter Korolov, for the UNODA's invaluable contribution to 8MSP. And lastly, I personally would like to thank the Director of the NCDR, Ret. Brig. Gen. Mohammed Breikat, the Board and all the staff of the NCDR, especially Mrs. Lina Abu Nuwar Ghazi and her 8MSP team, who have worked tirelessly to prepare for this event.

With my best wishes & thanks to you all.

سلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته