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**ADDRESS TO THE 2007 MEETING OF STATES PARTIES
TO THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION**

Dead Sea, 18 November 2007

Ad Melkert, UN Under-Secretary General and Associate Administrator, UNDP

Royal Highnesses, Prince Mired Raad Al-Hussein,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the United Nations and our Mine Action Team, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 2007 Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention. I would like to thank the Government of Jordan for so generously hosting the meeting.

Today at the shores of the Dead Sea, ten years since the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty, we have reason to be proud of the achievements of the international community. In a world mired by war and violence the Treaty is proof of constructive diplomacy in action. 155 States, international organisations and civil-society have all worked collectively to advance a common agenda for development and human security. I welcome the announcement today of Palau joining the Treaty, congratulations to the 156th State!

The figures speak for themselves. Since systematic humanitarian mine action began, more than 1 billion square metres of land has been cleared of more than 4 million anti-personnel mines, 1 million anti-vehicle mines and 8 million pieces of unexploded ordnance (UXO). These efforts have saved lives and limbs. In 1999, the casualty rate was around 26 000, in 2006 it was around a quarter that figure, which is still astonishingly high in the aftermath of conflict when safety and security are supposed to prevail for everyone.

But it is not only casualties that we should reflect upon: it is the direct and indirect social-economic impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war. This year not only marks the 10th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty, but it is also the half-way point to the global campaign to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Today is a stark reminder how landmines and explosive remnants of war slow progress to achieving the goals by further reducing poverty. In many developing countries landmines contribute to household food insecurity through land denial and loss of livestock. In Afghanistan and Cambodia for example, it has been calculated that agricultural harvests would have doubled had farmers had access to contaminated land. The mines prevent access to shelter, water and sanitation thereby exacerbating health and hygiene problems. In Chad, it has been reported that children do not go to school for fear of explosive remnants of war. It is children that we need to pay attention to as in some of the more severely affected areas they are the majority of casualties: 59 percent in Afghanistan; 53 percent in Nepal; 66 percent in Somalia, with boys between 5 and 14 years of age as a particularly high risk group.

national capacities to manage the current and residual problems, and to support efforts by national authorities to assist survivors.

But it is worth the ongoing collective effort, step by step. As many of you witnessed yesterday, at the banks of the Jordan River, demining has enabled pilgrimage and tourism to ancestral sites and holy places held in common by a number of faiths. Demining has contributed to a sense of coexistence in an otherwise troubled region.

It is in places such as this that we are able to reflect on the progress made in the past 10 years. Today is a day of mixed feelings. Undoubtedly the Convention has contributed to raising awareness and setting up effective action. Still, too many places are either inaccessible or are a residual threat to innocent citizens. And new conflicts more often than not bring in new explosive remnants of war. In this spirit, we reiterate our commitment to eradicate the threats posed by anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. While there is still a long way to go, we look forward to the next decade to envisioning a world free of the threat of mines.

Today, I had a crash course on everything that has to do with mine action. The experience of everyone here is an inspiration when seeing the commitment withheld over such a long time; a good example of good work and that there is more to come on the issue of cluster munitions. A strong hint of this is perhaps that Norwegian salmon is the first dish of our lunch here today.

Thank you.