

11. A

18/11/07
PM

**Statement of Canada
Coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group
8th Meeting of States Parties
18 November, 2007**

Thank you Your Royal Highness

Mr. President

Firstly our delegation would like to congratulate you on your election as President as well as for the preparatory efforts that you and your colleagues have put in to both our substantive work and the exceptional organization of this, our first Meeting of States Parties in this region. The visit yesterday only served to confirm in our minds the conviction of Jordan to this Convention and its conviction to finish the job as effectively and efficiently as possible. I am also certain that your personal involvement in the universalization of this Convention has reaped, and will continue to reap, significant results. Please count on the Universalization Contact Group and Canada to continue to support you as you advance our collective work in this area.

The business of encouraging sometimes reluctant states to join our antipersonnel mine ban family is sometimes frustrating and always involves a significant and continuous effort by the whole community. In addition to Jordan, I would like to specifically acknowledge three of our steadfast universalization partners for the major efforts they have made over the both the life of the Convention, and this past year – they are the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Implementation Support Unit. The tireless work and conviction of these three organizations, sometimes assisted by States Parties, and sometimes not, has been instrumental in advancing our common goal of a mine free world. No one else does this quite as well as you do, even when there appears little likelihood of success.

That said States Parties remain involved, as they are obligated to be by the preamble to the Convention which says, in part, “determined to work strenuously towards the promotion of its universalization in all relevant fora”. Malaysia has recently proposed a workshop within the Asian Regional Forum which hopefully will do much to encourage the remaining four states in ASEAN to join our Convention. New Zealand has for many years worked tirelessly to advance our common cause, as has Australia. In fact I must particularly note the work of Ambassador Caroline Millar, our now past President for last years President’s Action Plan which clearly enunciated Australia’s plan to universalize the Convention with practical action and high level buy in. Of course we should also acknowledge the efforts of many other States Parties in our work. For example twelve days ago, I listened to many States Parties to our Convention continue to advocate for the Ottawa Convention within the discussion at the Ninth Meeting of High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol Two of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Having said that, we must continue to be unswerving in our advocacy efforts.

This year it is Canada's pleasure as Coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group to report on the status of universalization of the Convention. Earlier of course we all had the excitement of welcoming Palau to our family. In addition, I am happy to advise the Meeting that since the 7th Meeting of States Parties in Geneva, Montenegro, Indonesia, Kuwait and Iraq have acceded or ratified the Convention. That brings our total membership to 156 States or by my count 80% of the countries in the world.

Within the discussion of the Universalization Contact Group we often make reference to both the quality and quantity of new States Parties. I submit to you that in every case quality is true of every State Party. A state that has never used these weapons and has no stockpile but vows to never use them is quality. Similarly a state that has them and destroys them is quality. All accessions and ratifications are important for the life of our Convention. Montenegro, Indonesia, Kuwait, Iraq and Palau's accession or ratification is significant because they help us meet our collective objectives under the Nairobi Action Plan, to:

Persistently encourage those signatories of the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify it as soon as possible; and

Accord particular importance to promoting adherence in regions where the level of acceptance to the Convention is low

Montenegro's accession once again makes South East Europe fully within the Convention family, with Indonesia's ratification six of ten of the Association of South East Asia Nations are now members of this Convention, and Kuwait's accession promotes the Convention in a region with lower adherence, as does Iraq, during a particularly difficult time in its history. Palau's accession will serve to show the way to other states in the region who have unique security arrangements.

Of the 122 countries who signed the Convention in 1997, only two have not yet ratified the Marshall Islands and Poland. It is our hope that these signatories will soon be welcomed as States Parties to the Convention.

The UCG would like to continue to encourage the EU to place an emphasis on bringing into the Convention Finland and Poland, the only two of its member-states that have not yet joined. States Parties, particularly those from within the EU, are urged to take advantage of all bilateral and multilateral opportunities to encourage these two states to ratify or accede to the Convention, to bring Europe to full universalization.

Canada also welcomed the statements made by States Parties at the 7 MSP and during this years interessionals on the importance they place on universalization of the Convention and urges all States Parties to work diligently to encourage accession by the 20% of the world that has not yet formally chosen to be bound by the obligations of this Convention.

More effort by a larger number of States Parties would take us much further in promoting universalization than a great effort by few States. Universalization cannot be the effort of a handful of states and organizations – it must be the collective effort of all States Parties and our partners, working together in mutual support of one another.

Of course we continue to recognize that States not party may not be in a position to accede immediately and welcome the steps that have been made or will be made towards accepting all of the obligations. A number of States Parties chose to submit voluntary Article 7 reports as a first step before they acceded or ratified and we particularly would like to recognize Poland's regular and continued reporting. In 2005, China and Mongolia were identified as States not Party that had expressed an interest in submitting voluntary Article 7 transparency reports. Mongolia has recently completed necessary legislation to declassify its holdings and has completed its first Article 7 report – we congratulate you for that step and hope that you can soon join the family.

We would like to continue to encourage States not party to submit a complete voluntary Article 7 transparency report as a step towards membership to the Convention, but add that this measure should be taken with the intent of moving more rapidly toward accession or ratification.

Since last year, there have been a number of activities to promote adherence to the Convention.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines undertook missions to Vietnam, Poland, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman and conducted a workshop in Tajikistan, all of which were very well received.

On 1 March 2007, the ICBL also wrote to each of the states outside of the Convention, encouraging them to join or adopt interim measures to show their support of a total ban on antipersonnel landmines, such as a vote in favor of the UNGA resolution. In 2006, for the first time, China and Azerbaijan – with which ICBL has been engaged for years – voted in favor of the resolution.

Canada undertook missions to Nepal, Laos and Kazakhstan and supported Workshops in Cambodia and Kazakhstan.

States Parties are encouraged to follow-up on all of these activities where an opportunity exists.

At one hundred fifty six members, we have come a long way in universalizing the Convention. However, many of the holdout states are significant cases. Among them are: ten countries that have used mines since the Ottawa Convention entered into force in 1999; at least fourteen countries that maintain their ability to produce mines; and eight countries that are thought to have stockpiles in excess of 1 million mines. This is in addition to the continued use of mines by a large number of non-state actors, highlighting the need to ensure universal adherence to the norms of the Convention.

We note in particular that Landmine Monitor reported two States not Party have used mines in 2006, specifically Burma and the Russian Federation and would like to encourage them too, to accept the international norm of no use.

If there is any doubt that universalization needs to remain a priority, let us be reminded of the words we all endorsed in the Nairobi Action Plan: *"the only guarantee that the significant disarmament and humanitarian advances to date will endure, and that a world free of anti-personnel mines will be ultimately realised, will lie in the achievement of universal adherence to the Convention and implementation of its comprehensive ban."* The tremendous effort required to clear all mined areas, destroy all stocks and assist all survivors must be undertaken alongside efforts to promote universalization of the Convention and its norms. Only then can we ensure that mines will never again be laid and claim yet more victims.

Finally, the Universalization Contact Group will meet this Wednesday at 13:00 in the Mont Nebo 2 Room to discuss activities taking us to 9 MSP. All are welcome to attend.

Thank you.