

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
ON UNIVERSALIZING THE CONVENTION  
(AGENDA ITEM 11.A)  
(SUNDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2007)**

Thank you your Royal Highness,

As I am taking the floor for the first time, let me begin by congratulating your Presidency. I am confident that, with your wise guidance and diplomatic skills, this Meeting will be a success. You can count on my Delegation's confidence and support.

Allow me also to join previous speakers in expressing my Delegation's appreciation to Jordan for hosting this meeting, and for the kind and warm hospitality that has been extended to us.

Our meeting bears special significance since it is held in the Middle East for the first time; in a region where parties to the Mine Ban Convention are not so numerous.

Prior to the Mine Ban Convention, the international community endeavoured long and hard to take effective measures aimed at preventing the use of anti-personnel landmines, and ridding the world from this scourge which causes widespread and indiscriminate human suffering.

However, the Mine Ban Convention has been a true milestone. This convention, which constitutes the most comprehensive and viable framework for achieving a mine free world, is a grand accomplishment of States Parties working in tandem with non-governmental organizations.

Turkey declared its acceptance of the norms established by the Convention, and started incorporating them into national policies even before its accession. In line with this decision, export and transfer of anti-personnel mines were halted in 1996, and their use was banned in 1998.

On 25 September 2003, Turkey acceded to the Mine Ban Convention and became a State Party simultaneously with Greece on 1 March 2004, thus fulfilling an agreement between the two countries reached on 6 April 2001.

This was a bold decision. Turkey is situated in an extremely volatile region, with many of its neighbours outside the Convention. Moreover, Turkey was engaged in a struggle against terrorism. Nevertheless, sharing the vision and goals of the Convention Turkey took the leap for a better world. Unfortunately, many of the impeding circumstances back then, continue to exist now. The volatility has turned into turmoil, many of Turkey's neighbours have not acceded yet to the Convention and the struggle against terrorism continues. However, Turkey remains committed to its obligations stemming from the Convention and continues to exert every effort to fulfil them.

Looking at the Convention after a decade, the general picture looks remarkably better than ten years ago. Millions of mines have been removed and destroyed, meaning millions of lives and limbs have already been saved. Nonetheless, many challenges remain. For a start, millions of more lives and limbs remain to be saved. Several States not party to the Convention retain huge stocks of anti-personnel landmines and they should be encouraged to implement provisions of the Convention pending their accession to it. One of the most important pressing issues facing us, therefore, is the universalisation of the Convention.

Over the last 10 years, the number of States Parties has increased to an impressive figure of 156. While this in itself is an achievement, 37 States remain outside the Convention, meaning that millions of mines remain outside the Convention's realm. This deficiency needs to be addressed. We are pleased today to see that a positive, progressively evolving trend of universalisation is still continuing. In this context, we warmly welcome Indonesia, Montenegro, Iraq, Kuwait and Palau.

Let me take this opportunity to appeal to the States which have not yet acceded to join the Convention. While efforts for universalisation should continue on all fronts, Turkey expects more effort to be exerted in geographic regions that lag behind in terms of accession to the Convention. For our part, we will continue to raise awareness and urge countries in our neighbourhood.

As for the universalisation of the norms of the Convention, we note the use of anti-personnel landmines by so-called "armed non-state actors" (ANSAs), some of which are terrorist organisations. We see this also as a challenge, and a very sensitive one. In this context, we welcome all non-legitimising efforts to ensure that these indiscriminate weapons are not used by anyone.

Compliance of ANSAs using anti-personnel landmines with the provisions of the Mine Ban Convention may contribute to the full implementation of the Convention. However, there is no agreed definition of ANSAs. Terrorists try to use this blanket cover of ANSAs for asserting their status and for international recognition. We need to carefully analyse what is at stake when engaging an ANSA.

NGOs can play an important supporting role in the implementation of the Convention. However, they have the obligation to conduct their work in a responsible and acceptable manner. They must demonstrate utmost care so that they do not become instrumentalised. Otherwise, this will not only diminish their credibility and tarnish their own reputation, but also place countries that support them in an inappropriate position.

A more detailed version of our views on engaging ANSAs can be found in the Annex APLC/MSP.7/2006/MISC.4 to the Final Document of the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties.

I thank you.