

**Statement by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium to the 8th Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, Jordan, 18/11/2007**

STATEMENT BY HER ROYAL HIGHNESS  
PRINCESS ASTRID OF BELGIUM  
TO THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE MINE BAN  
CONVENTION

DEAD SEE, JORDAN, 18 NOVEMBER 2007

Your Royal Highness,  
Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished audience,

First of all, I would like to congratulate His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Zeid of Jordan on his election as President of the eighth meeting of the States Parties. I wish him a successful year in this capacity. I am also very grateful to Prince Mired and the Jordanian authorities for having invited me to address this distinguished audience.

By hosting the eighth meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, Jordan has demonstrated once more its commitment to the objective of a "Mine-Free World". Jordan was amongst the countries where the Mine Ban Convention has entered into force already on the 1st of March 1999. I commend Jordan to have been the first country in the Middle East to have taken such an important step and that they have spared no efforts to advocate in this region the goals of the Convention and, I am happy to say, with success.

I am also very pleased to note that our two countries have developed since 1999 a fruitful cooperation in this domain, and that Jordan, through the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation, has adopted an ambitious strategy that opens the prospect of the total elimination of mines on Jordanian soil by 2009.

Ten years after its adoption, the Mine Ban Convention has achieved remarkable results.

The number of States Parties has steadily increased, but further work remains to be done in order to give the Convention the universal character that is needed to achieve its goal of a world free of landmines. The States which remain outside of the Convention should be further encouraged to join. I am firmly convinced that even States which are not yet Parties to the Mine Ban Convention are more and more inclined to see landmines as a weapon of the past, whose use is no longer accepted by the international community, due to their devastating effects on the civilian population.

Stockpile destruction is also an important objective of the Convention. Most States Parties have now fully implemented their obligations in accordance with article 4 of the Convention. The eight States Parties that are still in the process of destroying their stockpiles, will undoubtedly overcome very soon the technical difficulties they may have encountered.

This will be the positive result of a conjunction of strong political will on the part of the States concerned and of a renewed commitment of the other States Parties to international cooperation and assistance.

Even more importantly, the clearance of mined and battle areas is also increasing. As a consequence, the situation has significantly improved in most affected countries. I would like to seize this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank all those who contributed to these results, and in particular the courageous deminers. Some of them died or were injured during their hard and dangerous work. They will stay in our memories for ever.

We should not overlook the fact that still today, anti-personnel mines continue to kill or injure people, mostly civilians, among them many children. As a mother, I cannot but plead to do whatever is possible to spare the lives of our children. The number of new victims still amounts to several thousands a year. This remains totally unacceptable and casts a deep shadow over any pride we may have in celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Mine Ban Convention.

It is crucial for survivors to receive assistance for their immediate medical care and long-term rehabilitation, in order to help them in their social and economic reintegration. The Mine Ban Convention has rightly drawn the attention of the international community to the fate of the survivors, and the need to react in order to improve their situation and their conditions of life. I would like to make some remarks in this regard.

Firstly, the main responsibility for the implementation of the Convention, including the provisions concerning victim assistance, rests with the competent authorities of the affected countries. But most of these countries are at the same time developing countries, and many of them are quite simply not in a position to meet the needs of the victims only by themselves. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the donors' community remains fully committed to the objectives of the Convention and devotes sufficient financial resources to this end. Ten years after the adoption of the Convention, we may not rest on our laurels: much work is still to be done. Rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors, stockpile destruction and mine clearance, according to the schedules foreseen in the Convention, is within our reach. In May 2007, I took part in the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Mine Ban convention which was held in Brussels, and I was very pleased to hear that the Belgian Government reaffirmed its commitment to maintain its contributions to mine action at least at the same level as in the past. Most of the speakers, from the international organizations as well as representatives of civil society, fully supported this position. I am confident that all of the delegations here will adopt the same approach.

Secondly, it is obvious that the objectives of the Mine Ban Convention are guided by a general trend to ban all those weapons which cause unacceptable harm to civilians. My country has been particularly active in this field, by adopting national laws on these matters. Belgium is actively promoting the adoption of a legally binding international instrument to effectively address the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions. Such an instrument, which we would like to see adopted before the end of next year, should also include provisions on stockpile destruction and victim assistance. In following this cause we would truly

respond to the plea made yesterday by Miss Song.

Thirdly, I do not see the Mine Ban Convention as an isolated instrument. It should be seen rather as an element of a global strategy, aimed at the realization of "human security" for all people. Such human security agenda entails investment in post-conflict rehabilitation, stabilization, good governance and comprehensive development policies.

It means in practice that, when designing a national policy for mine action, synergies should be pursued, and that international support to the national strategy should encourage consistency between the objectives and working methods of the various actors involved. In this way, mine action will not be seen as a competitor to other development goals.

It seems to me, that the adoption and the well functioning of the Mine Ban Convention are a vivid example of the fact that effective multilateral diplomacy delivers concrete results and contributes to stability, security and peace.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by saying that the Mine Ban Convention had a huge impact already and saved countless lives by securing the destruction of stockpiles and the clearance of vast areas of land. But two major challenges remain ahead of us: we need to ensure that clearance takes place within the set deadlines and we need to strengthen victim assistance.

Victim assistance is not just about producing nice reports and statistics: it is about people struggling for their survival. We need to know better who these people are, to involve them in policy-making and to ensure that concrete and positive changes are made in their daily lives. After all, the Mine Ban Treaty is essentially about human lives. Therefore I was happy to talk yesterday with Jordanian landmine survivors. I am honored to have received their scarf and I wear it here with pride.

Last but not least, I would like once again to thank Jordan for having accepted to host this important meeting and to play in this way a leading role in the promotion of the Convention.

I wish you all a very productive meeting.

Thank you very much.