Convention friends also faced the cold and wind at an open air ceremony before the iconic Jet d’eau in Geneva. The fountain was illuminated in blue to commemorate 20 years of action, remember those fallen victim to mines and recall the work that remains to be done to achieve the mine-free ambition.

Participants included the Mayor of the City of Geneva, and Ambassadors and representatives of Austria, Bangladesh, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Iraq, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, ICRC, ICBL, UNICEF, UNMAS, UNODA, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions’ Secretariat.

On 1 March Convention partners gathered around the world to commemorate 20 years of action towards a mine-free world. Convention President Norway, hosted events at United Nations in Geneva and New York with among others the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF and UNHCR.

In Geneva, Human Rights High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet spoke of the importance of the Convention and its approach to victim assistance which “has shown unambiguously how an international convention can result in greater respect for, and protection of, fundamental rights. Its human rights-based approach is key part of its legacy”, she said. Over 30 delegations participated in the event.
Important upcoming dates

- **3 April**: Informal meeting in Geneva to provide practical and substantive information about the Oslo Review Conference and its preparatory process.
- **4 April**: International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action – Norway, UNMAS, University of Geneva, ICBL and UNODA to [host a public discussion](#) on the need to “Take action for a safer world”. Norway will also participate in the unveiling of a GICHD public photo exhibit in Geneva. “Life of Mine” on display until 5 May. [View the exhibit virtually.](#)

**Next on the President’s agenda**: From 8-11 April, Ambassador Brattskar will visit the Balkan region to participate in the [Symposium on Mine Action in Slano](#), Croatia, and visit the mine clearance programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Reach the Convention’s Presidency via email: mineban@mfa.no.

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**Cooperation and Assistance**

Norway has announced it will provide NOK60 million (over €6 million) to Sri Lanka via partners HALO Trust and NPA. “This year, Norway holds the presidency of the Mine Ban Convention, and intends to help Sri Lanka achieve this important goal,” said Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide referring to Sri Lanka’s ambition to reach its mine-free goal by 2021. Read more [here](#).

**Pledging Conference**

On 26 February, Norway led the Fourth Pledging Conference opened by H.E. Audun Halvorsen, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; 41 delegations participated including 31 States Parties. The ISU and Sponsorship Programme received a number of contributions including from mine-affected States Parties Mozambique and Sri Lanka. [Download videos and photos of the conference here](#), and find statements and final report [here](#).

**Action 17, Maputo Action Plan**

“All States Parties will seize every opportunity to raise awareness of the imperative to address the needs and guarantee the rights of mine victims, in an age- and gender-sensitive manner, including by engaging in the work of international, regional and national human rights, health care, labour and other fora, instruments and domains.”
**Chile**

Chile has announced that in 2018 it had destroyed 6,310 anti-personnel mines representing 88.66% of completion rate. In addition, the National Demining Commission (CNAD) and Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs authorities - seen here below - hope that an individualised approach could be a step towards further cooperation and assistance.

Photo top page, Engineering Battalion 68 “COTOPAXI” and Commander Col. Romel Vargas fly the Convention flag in Quito, Ecuador.

**Colombia**

The Convention’s ISU Director met in Bogotá with national authorities and relevant organisations to support Colombia in the process of developing a request to extend Colombia’s mine clearance deadline. Late in 2018, the mine action programme was relocated to the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, Miguel Ceballos, featured here with Martha Hurtado, the new Director of the Colombian mine action programme Descontamina.

**South-South Cooperation: Peru-Chile**

A team of CONTRAMINAS and the Peruvian Army’s Humanitarian Demining Unit visited mine clearance operations in the highlands of the Arica and Parinacota, and Quebrada Escritos regions in Chile, to learn more about manual and mechanical demining procedures and equipment used in these particularly arid border regions.

**Ecuador**

Ecuador which has a 2022 mine clearance deadline has indicated it can meet its goal with the appropriate international assistance and support. The Director of the national authority, CENDESMI Veronica Bustamante and Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs authorities - seen here below - hope that an individualised approach could be a step towards further cooperation and assistance.

**Angola**

Have you read Angola’s Mine Action Programme first newsletter? Find the first issue here and keep up to date on Angola’s efforts.
Have you saved the date yet? Earlier in March, the Jordanian Ambassador to the
UN in Geneva H.E. Saja Majali and Head of the EU Delegation in Geneva H.E. Walter
Stevens together with the ISU Director sent a save-the-date reminder to States
Parties and not party and relevant international and non-governmental
organisations to attend the Fostering Partnerships conference from 10-12 September
in Amman.

The Conference will be chaired by HRH Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein with
participation of the Convention President and global lead figures on victim
assistance and disability rights. Find the save-a-date announcement and read more
about it here. (Photos below show HRH and other leading VA and disability experts
at the previous global conference held in Colombia in 2014. Bridges between
Worlds was also sponsored by the European Union.)

On 27 March Cambodia submitted a request to extend its mine clearance
deadline. The Cambodia Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA)
was supported in the request process by UNDP, ISU and other stakeholders.

In March, the Thai Mine Action Centre (TMAC) Director held a visit to NPA clearance areas in Chanthaburi and Trat Provinces bordering with Cambodia – as seen above. ISU and partners currently support Thailand’s drafting of an updated work plan due for submission on 30 April 2019.

The Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance, H.E. Amadeu da Conceição
Ambassador of Mozambique to the UN in Geneva presented the work of the VA
Committee and concept of the upcoming Fostering Partnerships conference before
the Committee of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at their
2019 opening session as seen above.

The Chair also introduced the conference and work of the Convention before the
40th Session of the Human Rights Council on Disabilities as pictured below.