

Press Release



Anti-landmines conference opens for a mid-term assessment

Geneva, 3 December 2012 – The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland and Slovenia were joined today by the UN Human Rights Commissioner, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize co-laureate and over 800 participants, in the high-level opening of the Twelfth Meeting of the States Parties (12MSP) to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or Ottawa Convention.

At the 12MSP, the international community will carry out a mid-term assessment of efforts to implement the *Cartagena Action Plan*, which guides states in clearing mines, destroying stockpiles, assisting landmine survivors and promoting the acceptance of the Convention by all States during the period 2010-2014.

Almost 30 of the Convention's States Parties have reported responsibility for significant numbers of landmine survivors. During the week, most of these States Parties will report on what they intend to achieve in assisting survivors, by the time of the Convention's Third Review Conference in 2014.

Mine clearance is also a highlight of the meeting, with up to five States Parties expected to declare that they have fulfilled the Convention's requirement to demine their territories. In addition, the 36 States Parties still in the process of fulfilling their mine clearance obligations are expected to report on their demining efforts.

"I am confident that the 12MSP will succeed in reinvigorating the commitments we made in the *Cartagena Action Plan* to assist the victims, to destroy stockpiled mines and to clear mined areas," said Ambassador Matjaz Kovacic of Slovenia, who was elected President of the meeting. "Our work this week will be inspired by the fact that, fifteen years after the adoption of the Convention, there remains such high level interest in this cause," added Matjaz Kovacic, referring to the participation of the Swiss and Slovenian foreign ministers as well as other high level representatives in the meeting.

Speaking at the 12MSP's opening ceremony, Switzerland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Didier Burkhalter, said the meeting represents an opportunity for the international community to reinforce its commitment to end the suffering caused by landmines. "The Ottawa Convention is an exemplary and dynamic instrument. The challenge is now to redouble our efforts to ensure that the objectives set forth therein are fully realized. We must maintain the momentum achieved in these last few years and follow through on our commitments, thus, getting us that much closer to the vision of a world in which anti-personnel mines no longer claim victims, or inflict further suffering," said Didier Burkhalter.

Slovenia was also represented by its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec who called the Convention a "success story" noting that "the ban on anti-personnel mines has become a global standard." The Slovenian Minister however, also called for renewed efforts to universalize the Convention.

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

Good news on that front will be highlighted during the 12MSP with Poland's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maciej Szpunar, set to announce Poland's imminent ratification of the Convention. Poland's ratification will bring the Convention's membership to 161 States and it will mean that all members of European Union will be bound by the Convention.

With the 12MSP's opening day coinciding with International Day for Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations' Human Rights Chief, Navi Pillay, seized the opportunity to link the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the relevant human rights framework. "When victims of mines and other explosive devices acquire a disability, they fall under the scope of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or CRPD," said Navi Pillay. "The CRPD offers an essential legal framework for ensuring that the fundamental human rights of victims are at the heart of any mine action programme."

The 12MSP will continue until 7 December at the UN in Geneva.

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