

10th Meeting of States Parties of the Mine Ban Convention

Statement by Ambassador Christian Strohal

Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr. President and at the outset, allow me to commend you for the excellent way in which you have been guiding our efforts this week.

As we were reminded earlier this morning, today marks the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**. Allow me to share with delegations some words from our Federal Minister for International and European Affairs, Dr. Michael Spindelegger, who emphasized on this occasion Austria's commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities, last but not least in the realm of victim assistance and humanitarian disarmament. As he pointed out today, my country considers victim assistance efforts not only a moral duty and a right, but a long-term investment into societies at large.

Mr. President, as was pointed out earlier this week, the survivors of anti-personnel mines, affected families and communities are the very *raison d'être* of this Convention. It is our common purpose to avoid future suffering through anti-personnel mines as well as to remove all barriers and to enable those who have fallen victims to mines and other explosive remnants of war to live a life in dignity. 11 years after its entry into force, we as the Mine Ban community remain united in the pursuit of this goal.

Speaking of the Mine Ban community, my delegation would also like to welcome the observer States present among us today and thank them for yesterday's up-dates. We look forward to welcoming them soon as full-fledged members of our club.

Mr. President,

Earlier today we have taken a number of decisions on the Convention's future, in particular its inter-sessional work. Likewise, the discussions on the evaluation of the Implementation Support Unit serve as an important evidence of the Mine Ban Convention's constant evolution. Of course the Mine Ban Treaty does not evolve in a vacuum; many delegations have already referred to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Earlier today, we agreed to seek coherence in the scheduling of meetings

with a view to benefitting from synergies between different instruments, a notion that my country fully supports.

In fact, since we last met in Cartagena, Austria has taken a number of initiatives to further synergies and the implementation of victim assistance provisions between the relevant Conventions, such as an informal coordination mechanism among Victim Assistance experts. These involved experts active in the Ottawa-Convention, the CCM and Protocol V of the CCW, but also other interested stakeholders, such as the ILO.

Many delegations also attended our Victim Assistance expert conference in Vienna in April 2010, which brought experts and practitioners from the ground together, dealing both with anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. On this occasion and this special day, I would like to assure you of my country's continued commitment to these issues and we look forward to continuing our work and debate in this regard.

In concluding, I would like to thank you Mr. President as well as the Implementation Support Unit for their excellent work. We are definitely saddened by the departure of Ms. Sheree Bailey, who has been the very backbone of the Convention's Victim Assistance efforts, and wish her all the success for her future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. President.