

15th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention
Santiago de Chile, 28 November-1 December 2016

Statement of the Kingdom of Belgium
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Mr. President,

1. Let me start by expressing the full support of my delegation to Chile for assuming the Presidency of the 15th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their Destruction, known as the Ottawa Convention.

Let me thank Chile for hosting this Meeting and organizing the interesting field visit in the region of Arica and Parinacota. May I also salute your determination and tireless efforts to secure the smooth realization of the works of the States Parties in Santiago this week.

I would like also to commend the preparatory work accomplished by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and thank all the Committees for the presentation of their conclusions and recommendations.

A special word of gratitude to the victims representatives and the associations accompanying them for their courage and commitment and to all the representatives of the civil society.

I wish to align Belgium with the statements made by the Representative of the European Union during the general debate and other segments of our Meeting and would like to add these following considerations in a national capacity.

2. The **Belgian pioneering role** in dealing effectively with indiscriminate weapons such as anti-personnel mines and unexploded remnants of war is widely known. The Ottawa Convention is a successful and vivid example of the fact that effective multilateral diplomacy delivers concrete results and contributes to stability, security and peace. This Convention is not an isolated instrument but it should be seen rather as a tool of a global strategy aiming at the realization of the **human security** for all.

The UN Security Council bears major responsibility regarding the maintenance of international peace and security. **While campaigning for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the period 2019-2020**, Belgium advocates the relevance of this multilateral approach under the motto “ *Fostering Consensus, Acting for Peace*”.

3. The goals of our Convention today are clear : **a world free of anti-personnel mines by 2025 but also a world free of victims of anti-personnel mines.**

The Landmine Monitor 2016 reports an **increase of the number of people killed and injured**, in 2015, mostly civilians, **by mines, including by improvised anti-personnel mines**. Belgium remains gravely concerned about these data and about **the continued use of anti-personnel mines**.

My country strongly condemns any use of anti-personnel mines and improvised anti-personnel mines by anyone.

It is the reason why Belgium remains engaged in advocacy for **universalization and full implementation** of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. 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 anti-personnel mines, a weapon whose use is no longer accepted by the international community, due to their devastating effects on the civilian population.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. In order to implement the Maputo Action Plan, we subscribe to the priorities of the Presidency of Chile in terms of **mine clearance, stockpile destruction, cooperative compliance, universalization and of course cooperation and victim assistance**, a top priority of your Presidency.

(victim assistance)

5. During the 14th Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention of Ottawa, last year, the Belgian Presidency organized a **High Level Seminar on Victim Assistance** chaired by HRH Princess Astrid with the participation of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Reynders. The purpose of this seminar was to raise awareness about this very relevant topic, building on the momentum created during the 3rd Review Conference in Maputo and particularly on the commitment to the **full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society**. The focus was also put on the importance of **embedding assistance in a broader context of human rights and the rights of persons with disabilities**.

We are now on the right track.

Synergies will be maximized at the service of the victim assistance in the broader policy framework of other Conventions, such as the ones on landmines and of explosives remnants of war. Synergies will also be created between policies providing assistance to victims of cluster munitions or landmines and policies providing assistance to people disabled through other causes. The **Guidance on an integrated approach to Victim assistance** will help States to improve the quality of life and uphold the rights of victims, be it victims of cluster munitions, land mines and other explosive remnants of war or persons with disabilities. As the guidance put it in its introduction, *realizing those rights and addressing the need of victims requires a long term commitment that should continue well after clearance work has been completed, through an **integrated approach to victim assistance***.

Victim assistance, as a specific approach, taking also into account the gender perspective, is integrated into policy planning and financial support of my country . The new EU decision in support of the Maputo Action Plan will also take this approach into consideration.

As previously involved in **reporting initiatives**, Belgium welcomes another new document aiming at providing cross-cutting guidance to States on the implementation of victim assistance obligation : ***the Guidance on victim assistance reporting***, a fruitful result of a process initiated by Thailand, as Chair of the Committee on Victim assistance. Reporting is not always an easy obligation and some States Parties encounter difficulties in submitting their national reports. That is why we should continue to provide assistance and deliver tools, like this Guidance, to help them with fulfilling this important obligation. We are confident that this document will reduce the reporting burden for affected States.

(international cooperation and assistance)

6. Constantly politically and financially committed to the Ottawa Convention, Belgium continues to invest in the fight against anti-personnel mines and provide significant contributions to Mine actions projects.

In 2016, Belgium will disburse **more than €2.500.000** to International cooperation and assistance projects related to mine actions and other unexploded ordnance in the sector of mine clearance, risk education, advocacy and victim assistance in Myanmar, Ukraine, Colombia and Irak. Belgium will also respond to the ICRC appeals. It is **five times more** than in 2015.

7. Concerning **the future of the Convention and its functioning**, we welcome the implementation of the *decision on strengthening financial governance and transparency within the ISU* adopted by the 14th Meeting of the States Parties last year in order to maintain transparency, predictability and accountability as to strengthen the relationship between the State Parties and the ISU (*Implementing Support Unit*) by the current system of a four-year work plan, yearly budget, yearly pledging conferences and a financial security buffer.

The successful First International pledging conference hosted by the Chilean Presidency last March in Geneva as other international pledging conferences are important to achieve our objectives. Belgium contributed to the **financial security buffer** with a substantial amount of 330.000 €. We thank State Parties for their contributions to this financial security buffer and encourage other States parties to continue to fill it.

The confidence in the institutional structure of our Convention is now restored but we have to remain vigilant regarding the **fulfillment of the financial obligations** in due time by all the State Parties.

Mr President,

Almost twenty years after the adoption of the Convention, we may not rest on our laurels: much work is still to be done. Reaching the goal of a world free of mines by 2025 depends on the involvement of all of us during the daily implementation work of our Convention as during each regular Meeting of States Parties.

I would like to conclude in wishing you a full success for this 15h Meeting of States Parties.

Thank you.