

ICBL Statement on Universalization and Defense of Core Norms

5th Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty, Siem Reap, Cambodia 25-29 November 2024

Thank you, Mr. President,

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines would like to thank you, Mr. President, for all the efforts and engagements on universalization you have carried out over the past year. We sincerely hope these will bear fruit soon.

We are pleased to see several States not party at this meeting. We were encouraged by the announcement by Tonga this morning and we call on ALL States not party to join this treaty and the other 164 States Parties in getting rid of this atrocious weapon.

Mr. President, the ICBL welcomes the focus in the Siem Reap-Angkor Declaration and Action Plan on universalizing the treaty and its norms through adherence by more States AND a clear message condemning the use of antipersonnel mines, including improvised mines, by any actor anywhere under any circumstances.

At this Conference, we must recognize that the Oslo Declaration and Action Plan contained similar language. Yet the results of these efforts have not been adequate to the challenges we face.

No State has ratified or acceded to the convention since 2017. According to the 2024 Landmine Monitor, improvised anti-personnel mines are being used by non-state armed groups in 12 countries.

States not party Myanmar and Russia have used antipersonnel mines on a horrifically large scale, with Russia laying them on the territory of State Party Ukraine. Iran and North Korea also used mines in the reporting period.

We understand that the Russian aggression against Ukraine has prompted politicians in some States Parties to question their commitment to the treaty itself. Most recently, we are absolutely appalled by the shocking decision of the US Administration to transfer antipersonnel mines to Ukraine, that reportedly were requested and welcomed by Ukraine's leadership. As we said yesterday, If Ukraine accepts and uses these mines it would be in flagrant violation of the Mine Ban Treaty.

The ICBL condemns the US' decision to transfer antipersonnel mines, we call on the US to reverse this and we call on Ukraine to respect its treaty obligations and reject these abhorrent weapons - that have already killed and maimed too many of its own people.

Landmines were banned because of the horrific harm they inflict on civilians, and this is as true today as it was 25 years ago. As we said back then, there are no exceptions, no reservations, and no loopholes to our convention!

There are absolutely NO conditions under which it is acceptable for anyone to use antipersonnel mines. Ukraine has a clear right to self-defense, but IHL places limits on the means of warfare to protect civilians, and it must be respected in both times of peace and conflict.

The struggle to end landmine use is clearly not over. To win it, we need clear, consistent condemnation of any use of antipersonnel mines by any actor, under any circumstances, plus more

intensive efforts on universalization.

This is not a time for complacency, and we must not allow ourselves to believe that business as usual in the coming five years will produce the desired results.

We have a great basis for action in the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan. The essential challenge we face now is how to convert the strong words and aspirations into concerted and sustained actions by States Parties. We clearly need decisions from this Review Conference on how to better “operationalize” our collective commitment to universalization and the defense of the convention’s core norms globally. The ICBL has a variety of suggestions on how to achieve this.

First, all of the Review Conference’s outcome documents must use the clear consistent language which commits States Parties “to condemn the use of anti-personnel mines by any actor, anywhere, under any circumstances”. In this regard we welcome the proposed language amendments in the Political Declaration and the Action Plan. We also believe that all actions that may lead to use, such as development, production, stockpiling and transfers of AP mines, should also be clearly condemned by this conference and in the outcome documents.

Second, we suggest that the President and the universalization coordination group be mandated to mobilize collective responses to use, production, and transfers in addition to bringing in new States Parties. We also think it would be most effective to invite other relevant actors (such as the Special Envoy on Universalization, the European Union, and others).

Third, we propose the outcome documents call for increased engagement by high-level envoys and with dedicated funds to support interventions by these friends of the convention to be included in the ISU budget. As HRH Prince Mired said high political level engagement is crucial to address the political blockages in states not parties.

We also urge States Parties to serve as regional champions of the convention and, where needed, to provide channels for military-to-military dialogue with States not party.

And finally, we call on donors to increase financial support for universalization efforts, especially for national-based advocacy activities.

Thank you.