

Your Excellency Ambassador Ichikawa, President of the 22MSP,
Your Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium,

Your Excellencies,

Dear Friends,

I am truly delighted to be with you once again. It is always a pleasure—and an honour—to see so many friends and colleagues with whom I have worked on the landmine cause for many many years.

Your Royal Highness, it is especially wonderful to see you. We have brainstormed together countless times on this issue—in Brussels, Amman, Cartagena, Maputo, Oslo, Geneva and elsewhere. Your unwavering commitment and dedication have been a constant source of inspiration for me, and for all of us.

Ambassador Ichikawa, thank you for your diligence, your leadership, and your passion for the cause. I wish you and your entire team every success and I am ready to assist you in any way I can.

Dear Friends,

What can I say to you today that I have not said many times before? When I reflect on the Ottawa Convention, I find myself confronted with many difficult but necessary questions. Will we ever fully achieve our shared goal of a mine-free world? Should we be doing things differently? Can we do things differently? Do we still have the will, the determination, and the drive to push forward with the urgency this cause demands?

To be completely honest, what troubles me most is the sense that we may have become too comfortable. For two decades, I have believed that our Convention needs bigger teeth—more teeth, and sharper teeth. I am not suggesting that the Convention has not been successful. On the contrary, it has achieved remarkable successes. Bravo—bravo—bravo to all the champions who have worked tirelessly to bring us to where we are today. We are eternally grateful for your dedication and sacrifice.

What I am saying is: that the Convention can be better... and perhaps it must be better.

In my humble opinion ... for instance ...there ought to be a more serious effort on behalf of states parties to universalize the Convention. Just FYI ... a good number of states not party to the Convention have tens of millions of landmines between them stockpiled in military warehouses ready to be used at a moment's notice. And also have tens of millions of landmines buried in the

ground. So ... the question that begs an answer is ...can we consider the Convention successful if these states continue to resist and oppose accession? Why has the fine art of diplomacy by states parties regarding universalization not been commensurate with the relatively high level of funding that they are willing to afford? Why are some mine-affected states not party to the Convention supported by the donor community? Should not support at minimum, be tied to accession? Again ... TEETH...it is all about teeth!

And as for mine-affected States Parties... they must 'get on with the job' without delay ... especially those that have requested and received extensions. Why are so many falling behind? Why has the granting of extensions become the norm rather than the exception? It shouldn't be like that! TEETH!

In my humble opinion, the advocacy juggernaut that existed 25 years ago ... the passionate, unstoppable force that drove the Convention forward, must somehow be revived and infused with new energy and ambition. Because today, if we take a bird's eye view and consider what is left to do vis-a-vis the Convention...the task list is still enormous. Like I just mentioned, many member states with Article 5 obligations are wavering ... some states with great numbers of victims are defaulting on their promise to address the plight of victims satisfactorily ... and sadly and regrettably, as you all know ... several states parties have decided to withdraw from the Convention altogether.

On this last deeply troubling issue ... I believe partly (and I stress the word PARTLY) ... that this very unfortunate state-of-affairs has transpired is because to some degree (forgive my naivete) ... complacency has set in regarding the Convention ... and little landmine advocacy or discussion ... I would surmise ... has taken place in these particular countries in recent years. The individuals who championed accession in these states many years ago and were advocating tirelessly for the cause have since moved on to other ventures or pastures. And now the politicians and decision-makers in charge are people who do not necessarily have the institutional memory, nor do they fully comprehend why their country acceded in the first place. The whole idea of accession is that it is a solemn promise never to use the weapon ... to destroy stockpiles, to never be tempted to use or contemplate using the weapon in peacetime or during conflict. To totally remove the temptation. That is why I come back to the issue of advocacy. All state parties, I believe, must continue to advocate internally regardless of their landmine status and remind their politicians WHY it is important. We can't afford to have any more backsliding...we must prevent that from happening at all costs.

The world needs us to stay strong and steadfast. The Convention must continue to succeed and its sanctity to always remain intact! No 'ifs or buts.' We must do more, and we must do it more efficiently. Let us advocate relentlessly at home and beyond our borders ... let us work together seriously to increase accessions ... let us implement the articles of the Convention without hesitation ... let us honour our commitments to our victims and survivors ... let us strengthen the ISU substantially, ensuring it remains robust, dynamic and empowered.

And above all, let us ensure that the Convention has better and sharper teeth. I thank you all.