

Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished members of the international community,

1. Belgium is proud to have been among the pioneers in the fight against landmines. As early as 1995 — before the Ottawa Convention — we adopted a national ban on anti-personnel mines, guided by a simple humanitarian truth: The human suffering caused by these weapons far exceeds their military benefits.

2. Very soon after, civil society played a decisive role in bringing this crisis to international attention. From the very first mobilizations, numerous NGOs committed themselves with determination — work that was recognized with the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) led by Jody Williams.

Later on, public figures such as Prince Mired of Jordan, late Princess Diana, as well as your humble servant, also lent their support to this cause. Together, we helped shift the issue from a security debate to a humanitarian imperative.

Today, in a current geopolitical context marked by the multiplication of armed conflicts, it seems that force alone prevails. The progress achieved through the Ottawa Convention — where humanitarian imperatives took precedence over strictly security-driven considerations — now appears to be called into question, even though most of the victims are civilians, many of them children.

3. Indeed, Anti-personnel mines make no distinction between soldiers and civilians. Long after conflicts end, they continue

to kill and injure innocent people, hinder reconstruction, and keep entire communities living in fear. Children are especially at risk, often drawn by curiosity to objects that can maim them for life, leaving lasting physical and psychological trauma and depriving them of education and opportunities.

4. Although used on a massive scale since World War II, their devastating humanitarian impact became clear only later. In countries such as Cambodia, Angola, Afghanistan, and Bosnia, millions of mines contaminated the land after the wars. Easy to lay but dangerous and costly to remove, they cause a situation where civilians make up 80% of the victims.

5. This unbearable reality must continue to unite us. The Ottawa Convention — the first treaty to put victims at its center — remains as essential today as ever. Each new accession reinforces the safety and dignity of affected communities.

6. Now more than ever, the Ottawa Convention is a strong moral and political commitment. As the ICRC President noted in June, it is “one of the most successful disarmament treaties ever negotiated,” contributing to a reduction of casualties by more than 75%.

7. In this regard, and despite the current global challenges, I warmly commend the recent accessions of the Marshall Islands and Tonga — further proof of our shared determination.

8. I would like also to pay sincere tribute to the UN Secretary-General for his leadership and unwavering advocacy for mine action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. I am deeply convinced that Anti-personnel mines have no place in modern conflict. Alternatives exist that do not endanger civilians. We therefore call on all States to join and remain in the Ottawa Convention. This is not the moment to retreat, but to reaffirm our collective commitment to protect civilians and uphold the principles that define our humanity.

10. As Special Envoy, we, Prince Mired and I, remain deeply committed to promoting universal adherence to the Convention as well as advancing our shared vision :  
a world where no child ever again loses a life — or a limb —  
to a forgotten mine.

Thank you.