

**Statement of Belgium – coordinator of the contact group on
universalization –3rd Review Conference of the States Parties to the
Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention- Maputo 23rd June 2014**

Mr President,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

First of all , I would like to use the opportunity of having the floor to congratulate you Mr President and the people of Mozambique for hosting the 3rd review Conference which gives us the pleasure to be here in Maputo once again, fifteen years after the 1st meeting of the States Parties took place. I'm sure the Conference will be a great success.

In 1999, your country was deeply affected by anti-personnel mines , but is now close to be completely mine-free and I would like to congratulate Mozambique for its ongoing commitment in mine action and the Mozambique's armed forces who contributed to the mine clearance efforts.

In 1999, when the 1st MSP was organized in Maputo there were only 61 States which had ratified the Convention, among which only 43 States where the convention had entered into force.

Now 15 years later there are 161 states parties to the Convention and we will have the pleasure to welcome very soon the Sultanate of Oman as the 162nd State Party.

Besides, we also have in this room some Non States Parties which are attending the Conference as observers. I'd like to welcome them and underline that we're very happy to have such an opportunity to continue the dialogue.

In its capacity of coordinator of the contact group on universalization since 2011, Belgium would like to thank whole heartedly HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium and HRH Prince Mired of Jordan for their commitment and their tireless efforts to promote the Convention. I would like to thank also the previous coordinators of the contact group for coordinating the efforts

of the State Parties that made so many demarches with the ultimate goal of making of the Convention a universal instrument.

It is obvious that a lot of progress has been made since 1999 and since the last review Conference in Cartagena 5 years ago , 5 more States joined the Convention namely Finland, Poland, Somalia, South Soudan and Tuvalu

As coordinator for universalization I would like to draw your attention to some of the work that has been done recently.

The contact group agreed in 2012 on a list of 8 priority countries for the years 2012 to 2014 . This priority list has been elaborated on the basis of the assessment of the possible progress to be made until the next review conference. These are Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Libya, Mongolia, Oman, Tonga, Myanmar and the United States.

We concentrated our efforts particularly on these states and included systematically the Convention of Ottawa on the agenda of the bilateral meetings our Ministers had with them.

Besides the Sultanate of Oman which will be very soon the 162nd State Party as I mentioned earlier, there were some positive and encouraging reactions from some of them :

Tonga repeated that they *“had nothing in principle against the idea of ratifying the Convention”*,

Lao PDR underlined that they had twice , in 2004 and 2008 announced that accession to the Ottawa Convention was an objective ,

Libya was quite favourable to accession but wished to complete the democratic transition process before starting considering accession.

Myanmar also declared in 2012 that *“they were seriously considering all key disarmament treaties including the Convention of Ottawa as part of its state reform and was optimistic that its government would positively consider the treaty”*.

The US underlined that they *“share the concern of the parties to the Ottawa Convention and continue to demonstrate their commitment to addressing the humanitarian consequences caused by landmines both anti-personnel and anti-vehicule.”* They are awaiting the conclusions of the US landmine policy review.

We also demarched other Non State Parties which declared that although they are in a particular situation that puts them in a position where they cannot adhere to the Convention, they implement most of its obligations.

During the last meeting of the contact group on universalization in April ,we decided that it would be wise to enlarge the list of priority countries to be demarched and added Bahrein, the United Arab Emirates , the Federation of the States of Micronesia , Nepal and Sri Lanka on our list .

It is of course impossible for me to name all the demarches done by States Parties but I would like to thank them for the energy and consistency they demonstrate in their efforts.

Mr President,

It is a responsibility for all State parties to promote the convention but efforts have to be done at multilateral level as well.

The Council of the European Union of 13 November 2012 decided to grant a funding of 1 million € to support the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan . One of the objectives of the decision is to support the promotion of the universalization of the Convention through a High Level task force where HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium HRH Prince Mired Raad Al Hussein of Jordan and Colombian music artist and anti-landmines activist Juanes agreed to engage . In this capacity Prince Mired of Jordan travelled to a lot of countries to promote the Convention and Princess Astrid went to Oman .

Besides as all Member States of the European Union are now party to the Convention the universalization of the Ottawa convention is now systematically be on the agenda of the high level meetings with Non State Parties to the Convention.

Mr President,

Although the ultimate goal is making of the Convention of Ottawa a universal instrument, finding a way to bring NSP closer to the objectives of the convention and in the same time reducing the number of potential victims of anti-personnel mines is extremely important.

Therefore we particularly welcome the provisions included in the draft action plan in this regards particularly those related to the Non States Parties being able to make a political commitment to subscribe to at least some of the obligations of the convention if they are in a position where they feel unable to accede to it in the short term.

Also targeting assistance to those states that significantly support mine action is a sensible incentive to commit Non State Parties to some of the obligations of the convention.

Mr President,

It is essential to keep mine action high on the agenda and to continue the efforts to convince the last countries to join the Convention so that our goal of a world free of mines can be reached.

The draft action plan identifies four well targeted actions for the States Parties to take to promote universalization.

I'm confident that the action plan will contribute to reach this shared objective.

Thank you Mr President.