

Statement of H.R.H Princess Astrid of Belgium
3th Review Conference on a Mine Free World
Maputo, June 26

Mister Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all I would like to **express my gratitude** to the Republic of Mozambique, for hosting this 3rd Review Conference of the Convention of Ottawa here in Maputo, a city where the 1st Meeting of the State Parties took place 15 years ago.

Mozambique was then deeply affected by mines and remnants of war, after 30 years of conflict that ended in 1992. Since then, more than 20.000 landmines were destroyed.

I would like to **congratulate Mozambique** for its ongoing commitment in mine action, and I would like to **thank the NGO's** who, together with the Mozambique's armed forces, contributed to the success of the mine clearance efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It feels so good to be here, with you, in this broad community of diplomats, politicians, NGO's, scientists, scholars and advocates for this noble cause. I had the privilege to be part of it, from the very first years. All of you are members of this great universal movement.

The success of the Convention and the reduction of anti-personnel mines victims is the result of an unprecedented cooperation between NGO's, the civil society and governments.

This cooperation was evident both in the making of the Convention, and it still is in the implementation. Civil society representatives, including survivors and clearance experts, are spurring governments to action.

I would like to congratulate the civil society representatives, and thank them all, for their tenacity, efficiency and continued efforts.

And I would like to thank and congratulate **Prince Mired of Jordan** for the generous efforts he's devoting to the Convention, for so many years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Advocacy for the Ban on Land Mines became part of my life. Visits to mine fields, hospitals, diplomatic conferences and seminars gave me valuable insights in our world, as a witness and an advocate for life and human dignity.

With every step forward of the Convention, with every new success and achievement, I felt personally proud and grateful. Like earlier this year, when I was on a visit in Oman, when the Sultanate signed the Convention. It felt so good.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Anti-personnel mines do not belong to a bygone era, as some might believe. **Mines are still killing.** There are victims **every day; most of them are civilians, many of them children.**

It is obvious that efforts need to continue to ban anti-personnel mines, **in all countries.** The Ottawa Convention is a pivotal **universal standard** in international humanitarian law. We are still convinced that accession to a **legally binding instrument** is essential.

In the 15 years since the Convention entered into force, it has been ratified by 161 states.

The universalization remains a key challenge. We must continue all efforts **to convince more countries to join** the Convention, and to keep mine action high on their agenda, so that our goal of a world free of mines can be reached.

All Member States of the European Union are now party to the Ottawa Convention. This reinforces the legitimacy of the mine action of the EU. From 2010 to 2013, the EU and its Member States have contributed for 500 million € to mine action, **which makes them the 1st contributor.**

In spite of a difficult context of budget cuts, Belgium was able to maintain a level of contributions to mine action of more than 6 million Euros in 2013, both for demining projects and projects on victim assistance.

As mentioned in the action plan that will be adopted here in Maputo, it is crucial that State Parties persuade Non State Parties that are not in a position to join the Convention yet, **to commit to at least some of the obligations** of the Convention. But it is obvious that the ultimate goal remains its full **universalisation.**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Mine Ban Treaty and its sister treaty, the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions characterize and define humanitarian disarmament. **Both Conventions create distinctive and uncompromising legal regimes** aimed at protecting civilians and ending human suffering.

The rights of victims should also be considered in **the wider framework** of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. **More synergy** between the various instruments dealing with victim assistance is needed to boost the effectiveness

of the actions and enable the full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society.

I would like to underline here the exceptional work that has been done in this direction by **“Ban advocates”**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Anti-personnel mines can disorganize vast areas. Blocking access to roads, disrupting communication networks and preventing people from cultivating thousands of otherwise fertile fields, they deeply affect the socio-economic development of areas already badly hit by conflict.

Armed violence constitutes a major obstacle to the achievement of the **Millennium Development Goals**, as was stated by the Signatories of the Geneva Declaration of June 2006. The Signatories agreed therefore to strengthen their efforts to integrate armed violence reduction and conflict prevention programs into national, regional, and multilateral development frameworks and strategies.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

More than 40 million mines have been destroyed by the State Parties. Demining has resulted in millions of square meters being cleared. That is wonderful.

But we cannot pretend that we have achieved this mission **until all States and other actors have forever abandoned the use, production, stockpiling and transfer** of anti-personnel mines.

This 3rd Review Conference is an opportunity to analyze what has been done, and to evaluate what needs to be done.

The Maputo action plan **focuses on practical measures**. This needs to be done **in partnership** between the State Parties, the international organizations and the civil society.

Belgium will preside over the 14th meeting of the State parties and will implement the Maputo action plan. I'm proud that, by this Belgian presidency, the commitment of my country to mine action is highlighted once more.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I realize that my speech was very long.

Thank you for your patience.

And I wish many success

to this very important conference.