

Opening Statement
16th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
18 December 2017



Delivered by Tun Channareth

Mr President and all friends of the Mine Ban Treaty, good morning. Jumbriepsuo.

How wonderful it is to be in Vienna again celebrating twenty years of our treaty and twenty years since the campaign received the Nobel Peace Prize. Happy anniversary to us all!

My story with landmines began many years before. Exactly 35 years ago today, I lay in the jungle crying as I saw my legs. I just wanted to die.

It was my little daughter who called me back to life and love and action. Her simple request for money to buy a small cake made me move out of despair. And so, the journey to recovery began.

When I moved back to Cambodia from the refugee camp I began making wheelchairs with ex-soldiers from four different factions. It was there, at the Centre of the Dove, that we wrote our letter: "We were soldiers who laid the mines that blew off the arms, eyes and legs of one another. Now we beg the world to stop making mines to clear mines and to help the victims."

We brought our message to the Pope, to kings and queens, prime ministers and film stars, and just as importantly -- to ordinary people.

In 1995 I came to the UN in Vienna with my wheelchair and with 10 year-old Song Kosal with her crutches. We asked the diplomats to listen to survivors. Our friends brought more than a million signatures from 40 countries to Vienna, calling governments to ban landmines, clear landmines and support survivors and mine-affected communities.

Many governments did not listen to our call for the ban. I was so disappointed. I left the hall and tried to ride my wheel chair home by following the bus... But of course, there are many buses in Vienna and I got lost. A friendly policeman put me and the wheelchair in his car and found the place where we were staying. In

1995, I was lost. This was a symbol for our ban movement: we lost in Vienna in 1995. But the campaign and some governments refused to give up!

So here we are in Vienna again celebrating the victory that governments and civil society working together gave the world. Thank you so much Canada, Austria, Norway, Belgium and other leaders around the world, and ICRC and ICBL for showing the way!

Yes getting the treaty was a victory. Implementing is the harder part. Our brave mine clearers in Cambodia say: Give us the funding along with the same number of deminers we had 10 years ago, and we will finish the job by 2025.

A mine free 2025 is truly possible!

Much of the credibility of the treaty depends on the difference it makes to people living in mine-affected areas. National political will to address the needs and uphold the rights of survivors is essential. However, reaching victims in remote areas is often better done by small networks of survivors. Both governments and survivor networks need funding.

It is great to hear that Sri Lanka has become States Party 163.

I want all States Parties to clear their land in all areas and to help all victims no matter what their background. It was so sad to hear of the new use of mines in Rakhine State where refugees were fleeing. The Landmine Monitor tells us other sad stories and some good news. Make sure you attend the briefing.

Monitoring the treaty by civil society has been one of the great successes of the campaign and I want to say a special thank you to Steve, our Chair, and Mary, who had the vision and made it happen every year since 1999.

Thank you to our coordinators Jody, Liz, Anne, Sylvie, Megan and Amelie, and to all our national campaigners. And thank you to the States Parties who have retained their commitment to this very important part of disarmament and humanitarian work.

It is very close to the heart of survivors. Together we move ahead to create a world of justice and peace and reconciliation. Together we can do it!