10MSP Summary - Opening of the Meeting and General Exchange of Views (29 November)

The opening ceremony for the Tenth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty featured speeches by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania, and the President of the ICRC, as well as a performance by Albanian musicians and a Handicap International video on victim assistance.

The Tenth Meeting officially opened with the presidency being passed on from Ambassador Susan Eckey of Norway, President of the Second Review Conference, to H.E. Gazmend Turdiu, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, President of the Tenth Meeting of States Parties. Reflecting on progress made in 2010, Amb. Eckey emphasized the humanitarian essence of the treaty, and Mr Turdiu warned that States Parties must not become complacent. Messages were delivered on behalf of the UN Secretary-General, the President of the Foundation of the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining, and by Per Nergaard of the ICBL, which called on States Parties to "keep up the commitment, keep up the compassion, and keep up the energy" towards the full universalization and implementation of the treaty.

A few States Parties spoke during the general exchange of views, some of them noting the important remaining challenges on stockpile destruction and mine clearance, and welcoming the discussions on cooperation and assistance. Speaking on behalf of the European Union, Belgium reaffirmed the EU's commitment to assist states with stockpile destruction and clearance obligations, and stated that the only way to tackle remaining challenges was to "fully integrate mine action into the development dialogue", with a more long-term development focus. Cambodia, the host for the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties spoke, as did El Salvador, Algeria, and Brazil.

After mentioning record-breaking progress made in key areas of the treaty, the ICBL pointed to current "challenges to the integrity and credibility of the treaty" and called on states to address urgently compliance concerns and implementation gaps. In reaction to the ICBL's mention of allegations of use of AP mines by members of Turkish armed forces in Turkey, it indicated it took the allegations seriously but would not be able to comment on the investigation until it is concluded.

Some states not party also took the floor. Finland confirmed the necessary steps were taken for treaty accession in 2012. Azerbaijan reiterated it is not in a position to join the treaty yet but affirmed is in de facto compliance with its core obligations. India said that while it is committed to the humanitarian ideals of the treaty, it supports the approach of the Amended Protocol II to the CCW. Morocco again confirmed that it has no stocks of antipersonnel mines except for training purposes. China submitted a written statement.

The session closed with an address by young landmine survivor Daniel Yuval, from Israel, who shared his personal story and expressed hope that his government would clear minefields so that others would not suffer like him.