

Youth Declaration, 4 December 2009

Your Excellencies,

We are 35 youth from over 20 different countries, participating in the Youth Leaders Forum. Bringing with us our knowledge and experiences involving mines, we are gathered here in Cartagena to reaffirm the work that was started in Ottawa that aims to stop the devastating effects caused by antipersonnel mines. Some participants in our group, our friends, have been very severely injured by landmines. Learning about their stories and how landmines have permanently altered their lives, we are motivated to strive for change until our world is one in which their needs are met and all of our rights are protected.

We appreciate ongoing efforts states put forward on the Mine Ban Treaty, as well as the work being done by civil society, to alleviate the harm and suffering caused by antipersonnel mines and at the same time working towards a mine-free world.

Marking the 10th year of the Mine Ban Treaty, we recognize its positive impact on the decreased number of new mine victims all over the world. The Treaty has facilitated the promotion of the well-being and human rights of those affected by antipersonnel mines.

Despite these achievements, we, the youth, know that there is still much to be done to completely rid our world of mines. Therefore we call on States Parties and international civil society to carry on and sustain the achievements and progress we have all made towards a mine-free world. A significant increase in funding for victim assistance, mine clearance, and mine risk education programs is needed, thus we further call on states to provide the necessary assistance in concrete, measurable and tangible ways.

We, the youth, who are disproportionately affected by landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, even though we neither produce these weapons nor perpetrate the conflicts in which they were used, call on states not party to please sign, ratify or accede to the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions as soon as possible. Landmines and cluster munitions do not only maim and kill people, but also destroy the environment. Is it not time for you, your Excellencies, to give your children and your grandchildren the chance to live in a safe and peaceful world?

We, the youth, recognizing the need for a multi-sectoral approach towards the full success of the Treaty, are ready and committed to work towards the total eradication of antipersonnel mines. We support the Survivors' Call and, in particular, making the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan a national priority in each State Party - especially in affected states.

A testament to this is the involvement of youth, both in States Parties and states not party, in awareness campaigns on the dangers of mines. We further involve ourselves in the work towards the banning of cluster munitions, which, years after their use, can end up as de facto landmines, waiting to kill and maim civilians, particularly children.

We therefore call on states and international civil society to provide space and opportunities for the youth to be involved in the work towards a mine-free world. Youth involvement is crucial in the success of the Treaty, particularly with the sustainability of the work on the ground.

We, the youth, are not giving up hope that all our work toward a mine-free world will be realized in the near future. Not only do we still believe that our collective dream of walking this world without the danger and fear of stepping on a mine will come to fruition, we know it is in fact Mission Possible and we want it in our lifetime.

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