

First Preparatory Meeting for the Second Review Conference - ICBL Statement

29 May 2009

Delivered by Steve Goose, Human Rights Watch, Head of the ICBL Delegation

Thank you for the floor, Madame President-Designate. We also thank so many states for their kind words about the importance of the ICBL and civil society, and assure you that we will do everything we can to ensure a positive and successful outcome to the Second Review Conference. The Review Conference is indeed a special moment in the life of the Mine Ban Treaty, a moment that we must seize and take advantage of.

We see the Review Conference as a critical opportunity to assess if the treaty is delivering on its promise to mine-affected communities and to elaborate concretely how to address the many issues still preventing fulfilment of this promise. It is a time to revitalize and reinvigorate our work on the treaty, and to recommit for the long run. We need to make sure that the road to Cartagena does not end there, but rather lays a solid foundation for the continuing path to a mine-free world.

With this in mind, we strongly support the proposals made by you, Madame President-Designate, for the highest possible level of participation in the Review Conference, for a strong political declaration making it clear that landmines will remain high on States Parties' agendas for the foreseeable future, for a comprehensive review that also clearly identifies continuing challenges in treaty implementation, and for a strong forward-looking Action Plan that sets out concrete objectives for States Parties to achieve by the next Review Conference. The ICBL also strongly encourages all states to go to Cartagena with new commitments of cooperation and assistance, be they financial, technical, or in-kind support.

In particular, we are hoping the Review Conference and the period building up to it will lead to major progress in a number of key areas:

First, we hope all countries will take advantage of this special year to ramp up their efforts to promote the treaty internationally and regionally. We should all make a special effort to convince states not yet party to the treaty to join by the Review Conference and for those that will not, to adopt interim measures and respect the ever-growing norm being established by the treaty. At the Review Conference, States Parties should note with great satisfaction that the stigma against the use of antipersonnel landmines is now nearly universal. They should emphasize that the goal is to see no more use by states not party or non-state armed groups, and call for a condemnation of any use by any actor.

Next, the Second Review Conference must call attention in the most urgent terms to the continued non-compliance with Article 4 by three States Parties. We sincerely hope that at least two of the three non-compliant states - Greece and Turkey - would be able to finish destroying their millions of mines before this date, if not sooner. But we believe the political declaration should specifically refer to those states that are in non-compliance in order to provide the strongest possible show of States Parties' disapproval. This may be the only effective way to provide a disincentive for potential sustained violations of the treaty in the future.

Third, after the disappointingly large number of extension requests submitted last year, we feel it is necessary at the Review Conference to recall the treaty's obligation to clear all mined areas "as soon as possible." We hope to see in the future fewer mine-affected states seeking extensions and hope that such extensions will be only for the minimum number of years strictly necessary. This will depend on continuing high levels of international and national contributions, as well as the increased use of efficient practices such as technical and non-technical surveys to release land when appropriate.

Fourth, we believe that the Review Conference should seek to address the problems observed in developing and implementing SMART victim assistance goals in the past. We suggest an action plan with more action-oriented points, geared toward establishing inclusive and effective systems for developing, implementing and monitoring. Also looking ahead, we encourage the VA26 states to develop their own plan of action for the coming years before the Review Conference so that they will be ready to begin implementation immediately afterwards. In all

these elements - from planning to implementing to evaluating victim assistance programs - we repeat our call to include landmine survivors and their representative organizations.

Finally, we would like to see States Parties address other issues that are essential for the effective implementation of the treaty, including, as we have expounded upon this week, documentation of state practice on Articles 1, 2, and 3 and calls in the Action Plan for good practices in those areas. We also want to see continued calls on states to ensure full compliance with the treaty through rapid adoption of national implementation measures and the recommendation to continue current informal practices to address instances of non-compliance.

In conclusion, we should recall that the treaty begins with a call "to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines." At the 2nd Review Conference this goal needs to be at the center of all our discussions on evaluating progress and setting out future work. The ICBL strongly believes that we can achieve such a goal if we all pledge to renew our commitment and energy in Cartagena.

Thank you.