Mine Action Fellows Statement to 4th Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty

Thank you Mr. President. Your royal highness, your excellencies, colleagues, friends, it is our pleasure to address you on behalf of the Mine Action Fellows. This week 32 women from 18 countries have been here learning about how to become better leaders and the valuable contribution we can make to get a mine free world. We have to thank the governments of Switzerland, Ireland, Canada and Australia for the effort of bringing us here and Mines Action Canada for believing in us and giving us new tools to become better leaders and spread the word. Finally, thank you to the ICBL that adopted us as part of this huge and passionate family that comes from all different sides but at the end are chasing the same desire, no more people affected by landmines.

All of us here, are the proof that if there is a strong commitment for having a better world, no matter what language you speak, which country you came from, you can work together. So if we can do it, you as representatives of more than 101 countries can leave differences behind and remember that the 60 million people suffering because of landmines need you to be ambitious in order to live safely and have a better quality life.

The world we live in today has undergone profound changes. New actors have emerged on the international scene, conflicts and ways of waging war have evolved, introducing many challenges.

The recontamination of certain States but also the emergence of new threats, such as improvised mines or IEDs, spur us all, States, international organizations and civil society to adapt our responses to the changes in this world. Demining methods, messages of awareness and the victims’ needs are changing in front of these new risks. Adapting to change means accepting change. Accept that women, the youth and new technologies also have to play a role in building a safer world. Innovation has been present more than ever at this conference, as we have seen with the GPR, the drones and the 3D printer - proof that change is coming.

This conference was an opportunity to commend the efforts and outstanding work accomplished by deminers – men and women - all over the world - through which we are gradually approaching the goals set by the treaty. Under extreme conditions, they contribute every day to building a safer environment in which each community can find the path of development. In this regard, we remind each State that transparency, through Article 7, is a requirement and a duty to which everyone has committed when
ratifying the treaty. The submission of the report allowing the international community to track the efforts made by each State.

Of course, demining makes more sense when it is associated with risk education and victim assistance. Indeed, reducing the impact of explosive devices requires knowing and understanding the risks that can be encountered and the support to the victims.

We encourage all States parties of the treaty to support victim assistance depending on their needs, by protecting their rights and ensuring the participation of survivors in the work of the Convention.

State parties, when you agreed to the terms of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, you agreed to destroy the stockpiles of anti-personnel mines, to provide assistance to mine affected persons in your own country, provide assistance to other countries in meeting their treaty obligations and send the transparency report annually.

We want to thank the countries who are meeting obligations of the treaty and encourage others to put all its effort and finish the job.

Think about how many female survivors and women are working in mine action. How many of them are in this very moment on the field pulling mines out of the ground. As some of you saw, during this week we approached to those countries who have difficulties of meeting obligations. We want to highlight that if you cleared all mines affected areas in your own country, your job is not done yet. There are still 60 million people living in fear.

It is not enough to do some of the obligations. It is important to help the survivors to have a chance to use their potentials and possibilities to prevent children, women and men of losing their life or making their life harder because of the mines which are still there.

The commitments made over the past week and within the treaty are only the starting point. If we neglect human life in our discussions of policy, we won’t finish the job by 2025 or be able to support those who’ve survived these indiscriminate weapons.

Landmine clearance, disarmament, and policy must reflect sustained goals of our generation. This process must include women and survivors and support them in diverse ways.

The obligations that we’ve made over the past week do not disappear when you leave this room today. As young people, we’ve heard a lot about responsibility, but how can we learn about it when states don’t take it seriously?
Responsibilities of disarmament must be sustained in action as an example for global standards.

Most of us come from mine affected countries and the world needs you to make progress, to back up your good intentions.

We hope that next time, we will see progress and know that the Oslo Action Plan has succeeded.

Our generation is ready to help finish the job on landmines, but in many of our countries we still need your support. We cannot wait forever so we are giving you only five (more) years.

This week our activities have involved light. On Wednesday, we lit up Oslo in solidarity with the 60 million others who still live with landmines. We have not only shown a light on this issue among our peers, we have also picked up the torch from the ban pioneers and we accepted our responsibility to help finish the job.

We want you to share our light in your country when you go back, beyond just pretty words. Help us build a better future. Finish the job.

Thank you.