



Twelfth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention

Opening Statement by Dr Barbara Haering
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Mister President, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to take the floor during this opening ceremony of the Twelfth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention. Every year the States Parties reconfirm their commitment and their shared responsibility to work towards a world free of mines. Congratulations to those countries who have accomplished their tasks in 2012, most particularly to Jordan and to Guinea-Bissau who were able to declare themselves mine free this year.

The annual meeting underlines to what extent the mine action community – civil society, states, international organizations, NGOs, research – remains energetic over the time – and this even 15 years after the signing of the convention. And we all know how important this is. Landmines threaten the most fundamental of all human rights: the right to life and physical integrity. Mine action restores security for people in mine affected communities. In addition, the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention creates the obligation for States Parties to provide assistance to survivors of landmine accidents. In many countries mine action programmes therefore have established facilities for physical and psycho-social rehabilitation, and also for economic reintegration. These initiatives are now providing platforms for expanded disability programmes, in line with the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen: 2012 marked the first year of the new multi-annual strategy of the GICHD. Taking into account the changing context of mine action, this strategy sets two main objectives: to contribute to global clarity on explosive hazards and to strengthen the performance of national authorities as well as national ownership.

In order to achieve these objectives we have committed ourselves to deliver substantial enhancements in our Information Management System for Mine Action

to enable it to meet some of the critical data and information requirements of States striving to implement the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention as well as the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Most mine affected areas are rural and people's livelihoods are based on land for crops and livestock. That's why landmine and livelihoods surveys are so important. They document both: the harm done by landmine contamination, as well as the many benefits stemming from mine action. The surveys also document the different perceptions of women, girls, boys and men – information which is crucial to ensure we are setting the right priorities. As a good example, the Afghan Mine Action Programme has now completed a third Landmines and Livelihoods survey in partnership with local social scientists and after having been trained by our experts.

In recognition of the central role of land for the livelihoods of rural people, the GICHD – in concert with UN-HABITAT – launched a programme on Land Rights and Mine Action. Clearing land and making it available for safe use, is a sensitive intervention in war-torn societies. Ignoring land rights can trigger new conflicts or rekindle old ones. GICHD and UN-HABITAT are providing mine action organisations with practical guidance to ensure their operations take land rights issues duly into account, and do no harm to the rights of the people we want to assist.

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, this brief insight underlines to what extent the GICHD is committed to support the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention and to help all countries and organisations struggling for a world free of mines and other explosive remnants of war. In other words: we stand ready to assist you with our expertise.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a successful annual meeting.