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**President of the 9th Meeting of States Parties
to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention**

***Opening of the Cartagena Summit
on a Mine Free-World***

Monday 30 November 2009

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

I would like to convey my sincere thanks to all States Parties for having given me the honour to assume the presidency of the Ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

It has been a challenge and a great accomplishment that I will always recall as one of the highlights in my life of diplomat. It was my personnel - and my country's objective to promote the humanitarian and disarmament aims of the Convention and to address compelling challenges in this field.

Since the very beginning of this collective effort for a *Mine-Free World*, States Parties and civil society's steady commitment has been the key element in the promotion of peace and human security worldwide.

During this past decade, we have shared a deep humanitarian conviction that no one must be subjected to the inhumane, indiscriminate and - with our Convention - illegal nature of antipersonnel mines. Over the past ten years, we have translated this conviction from thoughts into substantial actions. Today, we need additional and more concrete actions to guide us, and we need to implement them all, if we want to succeed.

During this year, we the States Parties have made significant headway towards a *Mine-Free World*. It is my belief that the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is in good health and that much has been truly achieved. But we must at all costs remain focused on the remaining challenges and make sure that we adopt a long-term strategy towards our noble goal.

2009 marked a very meaningful year for the Mine Ban Convention. In March the 2nd we have celebrated the 10th anniversary of its entry into force and we have launched the *Road to Cartagena*. While launching that, we all were aware of the responsibility and of the importance of the job that we will have to achieve during these five days in Cartagena.

Yesterday, we run a *marathon* here in the city of Cartagena, and this seem to me the best symbol indicating that we still have quite a way to go. We have been running every year for our goal and we will continue to run in the future, all together. For those who have finished the race or are close to finishing, your encouragement is vital to help others complete the challenge.

We the States Parties have to ensure to keep on the strength of this Convention and make sure that all mine affected states will give the best of their ability to reach their goal. As the civil society wears on their T-shirts this week, I would also believe that a *Mine-Free World* is a *Mission Possible*.

Ten years after entry into force, it is now the right time to assess our experience and identify the challenges ahead. The dream that we have pursued over the ten last years can become the reality of the next decade.

Despite the progress made, it is clear that the pursuit of our core aims is a challenging and long-term task. I am confident, however, that the spirit of cooperation that has persisted in the work of this Convention will enable us to overcome all

challenges. For instance, with regard to *victim assistance, stockpile destruction and mine clearance*.

Progress in the ground can only be achieved if we strive collectively to raise the profile of the landmine issue and to maintain - and if possible increase - the interest of countries to eliminate the scourge of landmines. This will be difficult in the near term, especially with the global financial crisis and other competing issues that we currently face. However we must remain focused on the landmine problem because people's lives are depending on our action this week.

In my capacity as President of the 9MSP, during the course of this year I was designed to chair the Coordinating Committee and the Analyzing Group who examined the extension requests received under Article 5. Regarding the Coordinating Committee, I would just like to say the pleasure I had to work and interact with all my colleagues and friends who made up the Committee. All the its members, those representing States Parties, as well as the ICBL and ICRC, made invaluable contributions to the work of the Committee.

With regard to the Analyzing Group, it was a really interesting experience. I will however refrain from commenting about it now, because I will be reporting to you on Wednesday. Suffice to say that by employing the methods developed last year by the group chaired by my predecessor H.R.H. Prince Mired, we have tried to maintain the high standards regarding the requests received this year.

Over the last year, I invested all my efforts to promote the goals of the Convention by undertaking official visits to states that remain outside the Convention. For the sake of universalisation, I visited Laos, Mongolia, Armenia, Georgia, Poland and more recently the United States. I also wrote to Lebanon and Sri Lanka and I participated in various regional workshops aimed to universalise the Convention and to assist countries facing big challenges on mine clearance and stockpile destruction.

During the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee in New York this year, Switzerland together with Colombia, Norway and the ICBL, organised a panel discussion to present the Mine Ban Convention's work and the 2009 resolution on its implementation. In the last four years, there was no vote against this resolution but we still had to face the ordinary 18 abstentions.

It was great that in New York such a profile was given to a non-UN Convention. This opportunity was also valuable to promote the Cartagena Summit to states parties and non states parties alike.

Finally, I would like to thank Prince Mired of Jordan for his generous support, enthusiasm and guidance to me when I first took over as President. I hope that I have managed to carry on this duty with the same dedication that His Royal Highness demonstrated.

Now, I will let these challenging but motivating tasks up to my friend, Ambassador Susan Eckey, President-Designate to the Second Review Conference. Susan, I am sure that you will take up efficiently the important work that remain to be done to ensure best progress towards the full implementation of the Mine Ban Convention.

I must acknowledge and praise the tremendous effort of Mr. Kerry Brinkert and his team. I thank the whole ISU for keeping us on track with their professionalism and

firm dedication over the course of these last two years. I strongly urge all States Parties to further support the excellent work of the ISU.

The President-Designate and I have recently appealed some countries to ensure the necessary financial resources to support ISU's activities this year and the next. We are convinced that you would agree that the ISU continues to serve the States Parties extremely well and that it has become essential in supporting our implementation processes.

States Parties are all together benefiting from the work of the ISU, despite of that, few of them have contributed to the ISU Trust Fund in 2009. If we want to keep the level of the ISU's wide range of activities, I must say now, we all have to assume the responsibility to provide support. By saying that, I particularly refer to some States Parties which have never, or rarely, contributed to the ISU through voluntary contributions.

With that said, let me thank all of you attending today, the States Parties, international organisations and civil society who have untireslessly continued to dedicate themselves to advancing the aims of the Convention.

Thank you once again for the great honour that you conferred to me and pray that I have served you and the Convention well. Let's start our work now to ensure that the next ten years will be even better than the last ten have been.

Thank you.