

Introductory remarks for the Universalization session by Habbouba Aoun

I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to take the floor and share my thoughts regarding Treaty universalization after over twenty years of hard work and with an impressive 164 States Parties onboard. Still, 33 countries need to join this binding international law.

“33” is a considerable number especially when we look into who they are. Mostly, they are either a big NAME currently engaged, directly or indirectly, in military conflicts. Or, they are really poor underdeveloped countries suffering from these conflicts and very often from the legacy of mines.

But why stay outside? Why not join this humanitarian convention that cares for the lives of people, mainly innocent girls and boys, men and women, and for ensuring their right to life and safety?

What is it about this Treaty that you are still afraid of joining? Is it still logical to ask this question at its fourth Review Conference? Do we still, in the 21st century, need to explain how evil mines are and why every country should ban them?

This convention is the cornerstone of the whole humanitarian disarmament world, spearheaded by civil society.

This convention is about saving lives, reducing poverty, and providing better health to communities and a better future for our children.

Everyone who is part of it should be proud. And those who are still outside should join now and help us get the job done by 2025.

My own country – Lebanon also remains outside. Lebanon was about to join the Treaty. Thanks to the efforts of Princess Astrid of Belgium, Norway and other friendly countries, the Government of Lebanon started serious discussions about accession. We were almost, almost there - but it didn't happen. Now, we are with no Government and with people in the streets demanding a better Lebanon, hopefully a Lebanon free of mines.

I hope that my country, as the other 32, very soon join the Treaty so that we will be able to get rid of mines in Lebanon and in all corners of the world. And bring back life to affected communities.

Yes, a land free of mines is a land of better life.

We need peace. We need economic opportunities. We need to live with dignity enjoying our right to life without being afraid of dying or becoming disabled from a mine.

I call on Lebanon and the other 32 countries to join us! I call on all of you to work together to convince the countries remaining outside to join our Treaty and the path to life!

Thank you.