

Notes for ICRC intervention on "Universalisation"

Review of the status and operation of the Convention, Cartagena Summit, Tuesday 1 December 2009

The process of universalisation of this Convention has been impressive. Ten years after entry into force, we have 156 States Parties, a number that has taken decades for some other treaties of IHL to achieve. But the universalisation of this Convention is not only a matter of numbers. The moral and political norm it contains sends a message that anti-personnel mines are an abhorrent weapon that no party to an armed conflict should use. And this message has also been heard by most States not yet party to the Convention and by many non-State armed groups. Many States not parties have stopped using anti-personnel mines, including notably the United States that has not used them since 1991. Others have refrained from planting new minefields after interventions from States Parties, from the ICRC and other actors. Most no longer transfer this weapon to anyone.

Just as the climb of a mountain is often steepest at the top, the challenge of universalisation of this Convention will be most difficult with the remaining States, many of which have longstanding reasons for their non-adherence, including the belief that the military value of these weapons still outweighs their human costs. For these reasons our universalisation efforts may need to evolve in the coming five years.

An even greater coordination and focus in our efforts will be needed. We have gotten to where we are in part due to the persistent work of Canada and of other States Parties and the ICBL through the Universalisation Contact Group. But we need to do even more. In the view of the ICRC, there is a need for:

- A clearer and sustained focus on specific countries that have demonstrated an interest in the Convention or whose circumstances have changed for political or military reasons;
- A sustained dialogue by a greater number of States Parties and other actors with priority countries;
- More bilateral engagement led by States located in the same region as States not parties and through regional organizations; and
- More high-level interventions by States Parties at the ministerial level and above.

In closing, we would like to warmly welcome the participation here in Cartagena of 20 States not parties and to express appreciation for the explicit support nearly all of them have expressed in various fora for the humanitarian objectives of the Convention,

including several here today. Many have also supported successive UN General Assembly resolutions that endorse the eventual elimination of anti-personnel mines. The road towards this end may for some involve a variety of steps, including the ban of transfers, planning for alternative military tactics and engaging with States that have made the transition to providing defense without these weapons. We hope that for all of the States not parties that are here this week, the road towards elimination of anti-personnel mines will begin in Cartagena. And we urge these States to ensure that they will be among the States party to this Convention at its Third Review Conference.