

Universalization

Madam President, the government of Japan welcomes the fact that there are now 156 state parties to the Mine Ban Convention. However, there has been no new entry after Palau joined more than two years ago in November 2007. If we focus solely in the Asia Pacific region, there had been six new parties including Brunei, Cooks Islands, Indonesia, Vanuatu, Bhutan, and Palau. While we welcome the joining of these six new countries since 2005, there still remains 16 countries outside the convention, which is the largest number compared to any other region in the world.

The government of Japan has approached non-state parties in the Asia Pacific region, including central Asia, on bilateral bases and through diplomatic channels abroad, paying close attention to the specific issues impeding these countries to join the convention. We have held 19 meetings in 2008.

Madam President, we have carefully examined the factors which are inhibiting non-state parties to join the convention, and came to conclude that factors such as regional instability, relationships with neighboring countries, existence of non-state armed groups, existence of security and military alliances, domestic political situation, difficulty to comply with obligations under the treaty, are the main factors confronting these countries.

In order to truly promote universalization of the Mine Ban Convention, state parties need to provide specific advices to non-parties, and continue to invest greater effort. On the other hand, we are encouraged to learn from our past engagements that there are some producing countries in the region showing growing interests in the convention.

While the role of state parties remains to be crucial in promoting universalization, we realize the important role civil society can play in this endeavor. We are especially thankful to the work conducted by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, by sending 26 missions around the globe.

Madam President, we have to admit that universalization remains to be a challenge, but my government reaffirms its commitments and to continue furtherance through bilateral as well as multilateral engagements with non-state parties to aim for the world free of APMs. Thank you Madam President.

Before I conclude, I would like to comment on non-state armed groups. We understand that these forces had been using APMs in 13 countries in the past five years. This is a regrettable situation and also is a big challenge to the international community. We could under any circumstance admit the lying and use of APMs by NSAGs. This act is not admissible and we have to reaffirm that it is a minimum responsibility of the state to prevent further proliferation of weapons of any kinds, and to make sure NSAGs do not engage in furthering of APMs.