



SECRETARIA STATUS

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin,
Secretary of State, to the President of the Fourth Review Conference of
the Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines

Oslo, 29 November 2019

Mr. President,

It is with great joy and appreciation that Pope Francis takes the occasion of the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Anti-personnel Mines to address, through Your Excellency all of the participants to this important meeting. Indeed, twenty-two years after its adoption at the Oslo Conference, this significant instrument of peace continues to be a catalyst in bringing the international community closer together as a family of nations.

This Convention, a pioneer of a successful and concrete multilateralism which with time has proven its validity also with regards to other weapons, was not guided by political, economic or ideological interests, but by the moral imperatives of placing the human person and a sense of shared responsibility at the center of our concerns. For men and women, boys and girls, directly and indirectly affected by these indiscriminate and inhumane weapons, this Convention marked a victory of the culture of life and peace over the culture of fear and death.

Mr. President,

every person seeks peace, the opposite of fear. Conflicts disfigure the bonds between people and between States, with civilians always bearing the main brunt. In particular, anti-personnel landmine victims, among whom far too many are children, are a stark reminder of the cruelty and tragedy of conflicts.

Indeed, to the human failure that conflicts in themselves represent, anti-personnel landmines add a sense of fear that disrupts livelihoods, prevents reconciliation, peace and integral development. More than other weapons, anti-personnel landmines truly embody the conception that the other is an enemy. In this regard, I wish to repeat the call of Pope Francis and urge you to reject the temptation of viewing the other as merely an enemy to be destroyed, and not as a person endowed with inherent dignity.

Mr. President,

The lofty goal of an anti-personnel landmine free world by 2025 does not mean a victims free world. Indeed, numerous victims still persist and heavily contaminated lands are a constant hidden threat to the safety and well-being of entire communities, often the poor and most vulnerable.

Assistance to anti-personnel landmine victims, including their full rehabilitation, socio-economic reintegration, as well as psychological and spiritual assistance, is an essential step along the path to a peaceful world. Faithful to the humanitarian orientation of the Convention we must assure that such a priority remains highly before the public conscience. It is essential not to let anti-personnel landmine victims also fall victim to what Pope Francis has denounced as the "globalization of indifference" in a "throwaway culture".

To translate these principles into practical reality also means to make available financial and human resources as a concrete expression of international solidarity and of being a true family of nations.

It is encouraging to see the generous commitment of many governments in this regard, including some which are not party yet to the Convention, as well as the engagement of civil society. However, in order to achieve a mine-free world it is imperative that the implementation of the Convention truly becomes universal. The Holy See appeals to the countries which are not party to the Convention to adhere to it and readily implement its letter and spirit.

Mr. President,

In an ever more globalized and interdependent world the nexus between disarmament and integral human development becomes more and more evident. Indeed, this Convention truly illuminates and exemplifies such a connection. To receive the full benefit of this connection we must work together, lest our activities risk be to the detriment of others.

It is indispensable that each State Party respects its legal obligations in meeting the respective deadlines. Mine clearance, stockpile destruction and assistance to victims are interlinked and essential steps in walking together along the path to a world free from landmines. In particular, demining is crucial to prevent additional potential victims. In this regard, Pope Francis commends all those brave peacemakers who risk their lives to perform demining activities and wishes them a safe mission. Please do not be discouraged in front of such a daunting task!

Mr. President,

Anti-personnel landmines embody a false and artificial approach to security. They are a lurking threat to civilians. It is crucial to remove the risk and temptation to use these indiscriminate and treacherous weapons again.

On behalf of Pope Francis, I would like to congratulate you and Norway for your commitment to the Convention. The Holy Father asks God's blessing upon you, the participants of this meeting, with the hope that you will continue to place the human person at the center of your concern and make every possible effort to foster dialogue and promote a culture of peace. This is a serious life-long commitment that must be passed on from one generation to another. Let us unite in one voice to say: no more mine victims!



PIETRO CARD. PAROLIN
Secretary of State