

**Speech by Minister of State Katja Keul at the event “For
a Mine Free World: 25 years of the International
Campaign to ban landmines”
(01.12.2022)**

Today is a special day for us: We are looking back over the 25 years since the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty. 25 years in which we have worked together for the comprehensive outlawing and banning of anti-personnel mines. 25 years of assisting victims of anti-personnel mines, destroying stockpiled mines, and clearing contaminated land.

When we look at how the Ottawa Convention came about we find something very special and so far unseen: civil-society and international organizations together with a core group of 18 states – including Germany – joined forces and worked together on that specific aim: to ban landmines.

This cooperation formed a cornerstone of arms control and has advanced international humanitarian law decisively.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) was consequently awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for its commitment.

And the example has set a precedent: Similar processes led to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008.

And just two weeks ago 83 states adopted the “Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas” (EWIPA) in Dublin.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Starting with only 18 states the Ottawa Convention has today 164 States Parties.

We have collectively destroyed more than 55 million stockpiled landmines that can no longer kill, maim or injure people in and after future conflicts.

30 out of 63 States Parties with contaminated land have so far fulfilled their clearance obligations under the Convention.

In 2021 alone, 132.5 square kilometres were cleared and 117,000 antipersonnel mines that had previously prevented the use of these areas were destroyed. This land was returned to local communities.

This remarkable track record is just one indication of what we can achieve together.

But our job is not done: there are still pictures and reports of people who get killed by landmines as for example in Myanmar. And also unacceptable: the reported use of landmines in the current war in Ukraine.

We should never forget: Anti-personnel mines kill, maim, injure and destroy livelihoods. More than three-quarters of mine victims are civilians, half of them are children. There is no justification for the use of these murderous and insidious weapons.

At last week's meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, we witnessed moving testimonies from mine-survivors about the devastating effects for civilians when anti-personnel mines are used.

We also realised that our ambition does not go far enough: the meeting of States Parties heard reports of new contamination, the Convention's lack of financial stability, and, in some instances, an alarming lack of engagement in implementing obligations under the Convention, such as a slow pace of mine clearance and repeated extension requests.

On the other hand, we also heard statements delivered by States Parties and civil-society organisations that remain committed to the goals of the Convention to achieve our shared aspiration of a mine-free world. This shows that there is still a great community of dedicated people.

They deserve our steadfast commitment. Germany has supported the Ottawa Convention since its inception in 1996/7 and is strongly committed to its goals. Germany had destroyed its last stockpiles of anti-personnel mines in the month the treaty was signed.

Twenty-five years ago, we had a differently constituted Government. But all parties in the Bundestag were united in their support for the Convention. That is why Germany has always been at the forefront in the fight against anti-personnel mines, not least as one of the world's largest donors for humanitarian mine action - after the U.S. and EU.

And that is why the German Government decided that Germany would seek the Presidency of the Convention in its 25th anniversary year. Having been elected last week, we want to continue to help make this Convention fit for the future. It is an indispensable instrument in our common fight against anti-personnel mines and their devastating effects.

Among other things, we have set out to focus on three things:

During our Presidency, we want to work for better coordination of the international universalisation efforts, so that all states worldwide join this important treaty. This is key on our way to a world free of anti-personnel landmines. With 164 States Parties, we have come a long way, but 33 states - primarily in Asia, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia - are still outside the Convention.

We also hope to achieve more effective cooperation between mine-affected and assisting states, which will help us to move more quickly towards the

goal of a mine-free world. The German Government will continue to support States Parties in their efforts.

Moreover, we would like to address a challenge that was largely unknown when the Ottawa Convention was negotiated, but which is covered by the Convention: improvised antipersonnel mines (IEDs), which are used primarily by non-state armed groups and which claim numerous victims in many regions of the world. To help affected regions deal with this challenge, we will take a closer look at three Convention-related aspects of improvised antipersonnel mines: Clearance, Reporting, and Prevention.

The German Government remains as firmly committed to the Ottawa Convention's goal of a mine-free world as it was in 1997.

But then as now, it takes our collective commitment: tireless civil-society and international organisations and a dedicated, active community of States Parties. Progress is in our hands. We have achieved a lot in the past 25 years. But there is still much to do.

I am very much looking forward to the panel that will now follow, which will include representatives who played a decisive role in launching the Convention in 1997. I am sure you will also be able to report impressively on victim assistance.

Let us join together today in celebrating the successes of this ground-breaking humanitarian disarmament instrument! Let us be mindful of the challenges that remain before us! And let us work together to plan our next steps!

I look forward to lively discussions and important inputs for our Presidency.

Thank you very much.