

## **Finland joins the Ottawa Convention**

“The Parliament of Finland approved the accession to the Ottawa Convention three days ago and the Government is now in the process of finalizing the decision. This means that we will deposit our instrument of accession with the UN Secretary-General in the coming weeks”, stated Heidi Hautala, Finnish Minister for International Development today in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Minister Hautala heads the Finnish delegation in the 11th Meeting of the State Parties of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

The decision of the Finnish Parliament was anticipated in Finland’s Security and Defence Policy Reports in 2004 and 2009. In these reports, Finland aligned herself with the decision to join the Ottawa Convention in 2012. Finland has not produced mines since 1981, has never exported mines and there are no minefields in Finland. Still, this period was needed to adjust to the requirements of the Convention. As a member to the Ottawa Convention, Finland will fully comply with its provisions, Minister Hautala stated. “We will destroy our anti-personnel mines and fulfill all other obligations set to a State Party.”

The Ottawa Convention has been an effective arms control agreement and has had a significant humanitarian impact globally. The number of mine victims has been reduced substantially since the entry into force of the Convention. In her statement, Minister Hautala highlighted the importance of the Ottawa Convention and its role in the conflict recovery, countries’ longer term rehabilitation and development efforts. “Humanitarian mine action plays an important role in the transition from conflict to sustained peace. Integration of mine action in a country's poverty reduction strategy and development plans is a prerequisite for achieving the objectives of the Ottawa Convention.”

Since 1999 Finland has supported humanitarian mine action with over 5 million euro each year and will continue supporting it also in the future. At the moment there are 157 members in the Ottawa Convention. This is a large number, but a lot of work still remains. “Finland will be committed to the promotion of the universalization of the Ottawa Convention also in the future”, minister Heidi Hautala stressed.

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