Madam President,
Mr. Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Excellencies,
dear Colleagues,

It is an honour to address the Conference on Disarmament in my capacity as the President of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

May I start by congratulating you, Madam Ambassador, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference and wishing you all the success in your efforts in steering this body.

On Friday, March 1, the international community will celebrate the 14th anniversary of the entry into force of this landmark humanitarian, disarmament and development instrument.

Fourteen years is a significant amount of time and therefore it is timely to step back and take stock of what has been achieved during this period.

Madam President,

As I noted at the closing of last December’s 12th Meeting of the States Parties, the anti-landmines movement continues to march closer to its goal.

With the accession to the Convention by Poland and Somalia last year, there are now 161 States who have made a solemn commitment to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.

The accession to the Convention by these two States means that all Member States of the European Union and every State in Sub-Saharan Africa have foresworn the use of an inhumane and indiscriminate weapon that should have no place in modern defence and national security doctrine.
At the 12MSP I was pleased to hear that the United States’ landmine policy review is ongoing and that the US expects to be able to announce a decision soon. I would appeal to the United States to conclude its landmine policy review in such a way that it too will soon be a part of this movement.

Of course, ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines means more than only achieving universal acceptance of the Convention.

Madam President,

There are still demanding long-term challenges ahead of us: We must clear all mined areas, destroy all stocks and provide for victim assistance.

Again, in fourteen years since entry into force, significant progress has been made.

At the 12MSP, six States Parties declared that they completed clearance of all mined areas under their jurisdiction or control: Congo, Denmark, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Jordan and Uganda.

There are now 23 States Parties that have complied with this obligation. In addition, Hungary confirmed that it will complete its mine clearance activities in 2013, and Mozambique and Venezuela reported that they aim to complete mine clearance by the time of their respective deadlines in 2014.

Madam President,

With respect to the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, it is perhaps important to highlight in this forum that, in the time that the Conference on Disarmament has remained in a stalemate and is still looking how to start disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations, real disarmament has proceeded elsewhere.

We can be proud of the fact that since entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, together the States Parties have destroyed more than 44.5 million stockpiled landmines.

At the 12MSP we were pleased to hear that Ukraine would launch a project to destroy three million stockpiled mines early this year and also Greece indicated that it would reinitiate its destruction process as soon as possible.

With respect to victim assistance, at the 12MSP, the link between the Ottawa Convention’s commitment to assist landmine survivors and the relevant human rights framework was strengthened through the participation of Ms Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Moreover, as one of the leaders in this movement, Norway, stated, the situation for the majority of mine victims is significantly better today than it was a decade ago.
Madam President,

In the time when the minority of States which participate in this sole global multilateral forum for negotiating disarmament agreements have been talking about talking about disarmament, the majority of the world’s States have been actually disarming, reducing human suffering, and making a positive difference in the lives of countless women, girls, boys and men.

I would appeal to all members of the Conference of Disarmament that have not yet done so to join the Convention as soon as possible.

In addition, I would ask all States – States Parties and States Not Party alike - to renew their efforts to implement the Ant-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Our Convention is historic and our progress has been tremendous, but more work needs to be done.

Let us continue to march closer to our goal in greater numbers and with a commitment that will be sustained until the job is done.

I thank you, Madam President for giving me the opportunity to address this august forum.