Dear friends of the Convention:

The weird affinity we as humans have for round numbers has led to this incredible convergence here in Oslo of international energy and enthusiasm. We are here in Oslo to celebrate the number ten – ten in terms of ten years since the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was adopted.

There is a practical utility to our love of round numbers. It provides us with excuses to look back to understand what was accomplished, to take stock of where we are, and to look forward towards what the future may hold and how we might shape it.

I was not present in Oslo in September 1997 but I am an almost grown child of the Ottawa Process. For exactly nine years and two days I have had the great fortune of being able to both observe and participate in the effort to universalize and implement the Convention. I have seen a lot close up and it is an honour to share some of my reflections of this experience with you.

In my view, the Convention was significant because it featured human beings achieving their real potential rather than settling for doing what was only minimally considered to be expected of a community of actors given prevailing circumstances. The triumph of human potential over minimal expectations, including by changing prevailing circumstances and rewriting the rules, is a large part of the legacy of Oslo. That is, the Oslo negotiations set the bar high. We were no longer in the realm of aiming to meet minimal expectations. We were now expected to meet the highest possible of expectations – to achieve our maximum human potential.

If we are to be true to the legacy of Oslo, we need to constantly challenge ourselves to achieve our true potential. We need more of what has worked well. We need to do what does work well even better than before. We need to take what we have learned from this effort and apply it beyond the narrow matter of anti-personnel mines. And, we need to apply these lessons elsewhere without forgetting the work that remains with respect to anti-personnel mines. Please allow me to illustrate these four points.

First: What has worked well has been the set of interrelated, cost-effective, flexible and appropriately-sized structures and mechanisms to support the implementation of the Convention. This machinery of implementation has been good for many reasons with one being the manner in which mechanisms like Convention’s Intersessional Work Programme have created in essence a social structure within the Convention. This has helped solidify the mine ban norm and propagate both an implementation norm – the idea that the Convention is not merely a set of prohibitions but rather contains a framework for mine action – with action implying that deeds will be done, and, certain process norms – ways of doing business –
which have served the Convention well. Moreover, the Intersessional Work Programme institutionalized perhaps not the Ottawa Process core group but rather a core group of concerned States, allowing for a large number of States Parties to the Convention – 45 at last count since 1999 – to make a contribution.

It is perhaps no accident that the effort to establish implementation machinery was led by many individuals who were central to the Ottawa Process, including Steffen Kongstad of Norway, Tom Markram of South Africa, Bob Lawson of Canada and David Atwood of the Quaker United Nations Office. With a social structure established, newcomers have entered the Convention’s social space, absorbing norms and infusing these norms with their own special contributions. For instance, it was a post-Oslo generation which included individuals like Cecilia Sanchez of Nicaragua, Gustavo Laurie of Peru, Jean Lint of Belgium and Peter Sagar of Canada which was key to the 2002 refocus of the Convention’s work on those areas most directly related to the core humanitarian purpose of the Convention, including the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, clearing mined areas, assisting the victims, and ensuring universal acceptance of the Convention. The innovation led by this second generation resulted in acceptance of the organizing framework for the Convention’s work which exists to this day and which was adeptly applied by another child of the Ottawa Process, Wolfgang Petritsch in his leadership over the landmark 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World.

Ten years after Oslo, though, we face the challenge that acceptance of the mine ban norm, the implementation norm and the Convention’s process norms is not yet irreversible. Indeed, these norms are constantly being challenged. We have the opportunity, therefore, to ask if the implementation machinery of the Convention is adequate to enable one generation of Convention practitioners to transmit to and infect others in ways of doing business which have served the Convention well.

Second: What is it that we are doing well that we can do even better? Let me illustrate this point by focusing on the theme of this conference – the central role of civil society organizations. As we have heard already this week, civil society organizations working on the landmine issue have provided a watershed example of good practice to those working in other issue areas.

We would not be achieving our full potential if we rested here, though. The bountiful energy and skills found in civil society organizations can continue to excel. For example, the pursuit of universal acceptance of the Convention likely can only be achieved if civil society efforts broaden to ensure the development true indigenous campaigns in countries like Finland, India and Israel where the voices of civil society can make a difference in public policy. Similarly, national responsibility over implementation will be more likely if campaigning activity can increase within mine affected countries. In addition, civil society organizations can contribute even more by ensuring that the purported voice of civil society remains a credible manifestation of the aims and desires of a society rather than the voice of single individual organizations. I can appreciate that campaign development is hard work. But it is necessary work if civil society is going to continue to maximize its comparative advantage.

When it comes to the comparative advantage of civil society organizations, a real strength as demonstrated with AP mines concerns independent monitoring. The Landmine Monitor is an impressive effort and has improved year after year, thanks in large part to the incredible effort and sacrifice of the initiative’s leaders, such as Paul Hannon and Steve Goose, as well as that
of dozens of individual researchers and research coordinators. Ten years after Oslo, the opportunity exists for constant improvement of civil society monitoring of the effort to fulfill the Convention’s promise with one area of interest relating to monitoring of States’ commitment to assist landmine survivors. Civil society has been strong in calling for more to be done for landmine survivors, but it has been weak in clarifying exactly what should be done, by whom, how much and by when. States need to treat their responsibilities to survivors with the same degree of precision that they accord to their obligations to destroy mines. Civil society monitoring needs to do the same.

My third point is that we need to take what we have learned from this effort and apply it beyond the narrow matter of anti-personnel mines. We are not an isolated landmines or Convention community but rather a set of actors with professional and personal concern for a wide range of challenges that face humanity. Therefore, if we like what is happening with respect to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, why is there not more energy and thought going in to applying it elsewhere?

For States the place to start might be with respect to the Convention on Certain Convention Weapons – or CCW – and the Conference on Disarmament – or CD. In Geneva, disarmament diplomats love the CCW and CD because they love to complain about a slow pace of action and marginal scope for progress in one and complete deadlock in the other. And they like to remark about how such processes should be more like the AP Mine Ban Convention.

If they really feel this way, the power to make change rests with them. For instance, the vast majority of States which are parties to the CCW and its protocols are also parties to the AP Mine Ban Convention. If these actors have an appreciation for the methods and means which have led to success of this Convention, what is stopping them from making change – or at least making the case for making change – in other fora.

We can also take what we have learned from our efforts to date and apply it in addressing new issues of concern. A great deal can be done, for instance, to breath life into the CCW’s very tentative protocol on explosive remnants of war. This can be done by parties to that protocol – again, which are largely the same States which are parties to the AP Mine Ban Convention – understanding that they actually have something to implement and developing the machinery necessary to support the pursuit of concrete, measurable and time-bound objectives.

Even more can be done with respect to current efforts to address the problems caused by cluster munitions. An opportunity will be lost, however, if we do not apply ten years of lessons generated since Oslo to develop an instrument that is even better than the AP Mine Ban Convention. Rest assured – I am not entering the controversial domain of what such an instrument should actually cover. Rather, I am speaking about how any new instrument can clarify responsibilities, ensure that they are measurable and time-bound, provide for reporting that would provide a clear picture of progress made in implementation, and, - to revert to one of my favorite topics – treat responsibilities to survivors with the same degree of precision that we accord to obligations to prohibit or restrict, or, to clear and destroy weapons. Again, we should be measured relative to our potential, not in relationship to minimal expectations. We have learned a lot in ten years and we should be expected to do better.

My final point concerns applying these lessons elsewhere without forgetting about the need to give due attention to the work that remains with respect to anti-personnel mines. Just as we
as humans have a natural affinity to round numbers, we also have a propensity to be drawn to that which is new over that which already exists. Moreover, it is a particular trait of disarmament diplomats as well as what I would call civil society diplomats to be attracted to the excitement of negotiations over the more mundane mechanics of implementation.

While it is admirable that the attention of the international community has turned to addressing the problems caused by cluster munitions, let us remember that a great deal of work remains to ensure that what was established in Oslo in 1997 lives up to its promise. The reality for old friends like Mohammad Breikat of Jordan and Sam Sotha of Cambodia is the daily task of fulfilling the demanding set of obligations found in that which already exists.

By making such points I am not engaging in a competition for time and attention. This is not the case as I have greater expectations for the potential of humankind. That is, I think we have the potential to do more than one thing at once and to do each well. While we seize the opportunity to develop something new, let us also continue to apply that which we have already created.

The effort to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines did not end in Oslo on 18 September 1997. In many respects it just began. And so while we gather today to celebrate the number ten, let us remark that many challenges remain – as do many opportunities – opportunities which include both reinvigorating the spirit of Oslo past to overcome challenges present and capturing some of that energy to address a wider range of humanitarian concerns.

Thank you.