Your Royal Highness, Nobel laureates, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen – dear friends of the Convention,

I hope you are all comfortably seated – because you are now seated on historic ground. This is where the Mine Ban Convention was negotiated and agreed between 89 States ten years ago to the day. Also present were civil society actors under the umbrella of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, humanitarian organisations, the international Red Cross and the UN. Organisations that had been participating all the way and who were here to witness that almost 90 States undertook to do their utmost to make the world mine free. Furthermore, they all committed themselves to continuing to work together for the full implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

As is the case for all edifices, the quality and shape of the building is largely determined by the foundation. We built for the future, and we built solid. The Mine Ban Convention is a total ban on all anti-personnel mines.

Mine Ban Convention and its Implementation
That we managed to arrive at agreement on that final piece of paper in this building ten years ago was a huge victory, and worthy of celebration in its own right. But that is not really what we have invited you here to celebrate and commemorate. The subsequent signing of the convention in Ottawa on 3 December 1997 was just the “grand finale” of the first phase of our work.

Due to the tireless efforts over the last ten years of the States Parties, the ICBL, humanitarian organisations, the ICRC and the UN to implement the provisions of the convention, we are well on the way to reaching our goal of a mine-free world. The many survivors and the affected families and communities can testify to this. We still have a lot of work to do, but the convention has proved to be a robust framework and the best tool for implementing its provisions.

Many lessons have been learned, and new challenges have arisen in the course of implementing the convention. A key factor in ensuring effective implementation has been our ability to continue the unique partnerships we created during the process and to maintain focus on the situation on the ground. The framework for implementing the convention – with the annual meetings of the States Parties, the intersessional meetings, contact groups and workshops – is in fact an action-oriented work programme for achieving the ultimate aim of the convention – a mine-free world.
International Humanitarian Questions

So – we have managed to address a very pressing humanitarian problem. But mines are only one of a number of threats to human security in war zones. The use of indiscriminate area weapons, weapons that create large amounts of explosive remnants of war, and the absurd numbers of small arms and light weapons are just some examples of areas in need of action. The ongoing process to establish a new international prohibition on cluster munitions – which many of you here support – is one response. But we need to address all the issues related to human security in a much more rational and efficient manner than we see today. The threat to the security of people and their communities posed by armed and explosive violence is also a threat to development and basic human rights.

Perspective on Processes

We believe it is necessary to start thinking of disarmament as a humanitarian necessity and responsibility. We need to start “thinking outside the bomb” – and focus on disarmament as humanitarian action. This means thinking beyond technical aspects, no longer focussing on the weapon and beginning to address the effects of their use on civilians and their future – something that is already an obligation under international humanitarian law. We need to understand the field realities where these weapons are used and respond to that.

We are in an environment with many different – and at times incompatible – challenges. Sometimes these premises and limitations are real – but sometimes they might just be anticipated and more a product of lack of imagination and political courage than anything else. The Landmine Convention came about as a result of political courage, supported by evidence from the field and in close partnership with civil society. I believe that this is a model we should build on in other processes aimed at addressing armed violence. Inaction is often blamed on a lack of political will. But political will can be created, and we need to be better at finding ways to do just that.

Yesterday the Minister of Foreign Affairs said to the NGO forum: “Without civil society, there would be no Mine Ban Convention, and most likely no International Criminal Court, no Kimberly process, no Security Council resolution 1325, no groundbreaking new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and no real discussion on how to tackle the many problems caused by small arms and light weapons. And without you we would not have passed the half-way mark in the process to ban cluster munitions. If we are to continue to make progress in these areas, we need to maintain and further develop the partnerships between States and civil society.”

What Can We Learn?

So, what can we learn from the Ottawa process when seeking to get other humanitarian issues on the international agenda?

In the Ottawa process we reinvented the rules. States accepted civil society as a partner in a multilateral process. We introduced deadlines and measurable targets for progress. Therefore the process also breathed new life into the multilateral security system.

We need to ask for what we want – and not necessary what we think is politically or militarily realistic – at an early stage of a process. If we think this is unrealistic under the given conditions, we should try to change these conditions, and approach it as a learning process where both positions and the underlying conditions can change.
We have also learned that we have an obligation to strive to achieve something beyond the negotiated paper. The real test of our success will be whether what we do makes a difference on the ground. This is the real success of the Mine Ban Convention, and this will be the real test of the new Cluster Munitions Convention.

The Ottawa process gave us what felt like a rather unique experience. Is it really that unique? At least I can say that what we learned is that sometimes, what we think is impossible isn’t – sometimes it is possible, and we did it! And now we want to do it again.

The nation state is no longer the sole broker of international relations. Private sector activities and decision-making interacts with key aspects of international peace and security, directly and indirectly. All modern conflicts are in one way or another linked to processes in the global marketplace, in both positive and negative ways. Civil society actors play an increasingly important role in shaping global policy discourse on a number of key global challenges.

Those of us who represent governments need to apply this global framework in our work. We need to actively encourage civil society participation in international security negotiations, if for no other reason than to increase the effectiveness of the negotiations and ensure the legitimacy of the outcome.

This does not mean that civil society organisations should take over the role of States and governments. States and NGO have different roles, responsibilities, constituencies and agendas. Civil society actors should not attempt to act as if they are governments. In the system we have, it is States that adopt and implement international treaties. But in the processes leading up to the point of final adoption of a new treaty and in its implementation, there is a role and a need for civil society participation. The Ottawa process, the Mine Ban Convention and the role of Landmine Monitor in the implementation proved this point clearly. The challenge for us now is to take this further into other human security processes – for example in relation to small arms work and the extremely important efforts to stop a new nuclear arms race.

To achieve this, we will be working together with those who share the same goals and understanding, irrespective of regional divides, or whether they are States or civil society actors.

Norway as a Multilateral Actor
The Landmine Convention is one of the international processes that have provided us with opportunities and experience to in taking a more active role in global affairs. We want to actively shape the agendas and the arenas where the processes are taking place.

The ongoing process towards an international ban on cluster munitions is the natural continuation and part of that new role where we are actively applying the lessons learned from the Ottawa process and the Mine Ban Convention.

We are now in the middle of the process towards an international agreement on a ban on cluster munitions. Our work shall be finalised by the end of 2008. It is with confidence I say that I hope to see many of you back here in Oslo next fall for an official signing of the new Convention on Cluster Munitions.
The Landmine Convention is a result of true, effective international cooperation. It demonstrates what is possible when we work together as partners, rather than exclusively pursuing our own interests. Therefore I am grateful that so many of you took the time to come here and celebrate this achievement together with us – it would not have been possible without you.

Thank you.