

**ICBL statement on universalization
Intersessional Standing Committee Meetings; Geneva 2 June 2008**

Mr Chairman,

We are meeting this week in the wake of the historic negotiations in Dublin of a new treaty to ban cluster munitions that – much as antipersonnel mines do – cause unacceptable harm to civilians, feeling encouraged and energized by this new collective effort to protect lives and livelihoods from the long-lasting devastation wrought by these indiscriminate weapons.

The ICBL was extremely pleased to note the presence in Dublin of 15 States not parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, eight of which (Bahrain, Finland, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Marshall Islands, Morocco, Nepal) as full participants and seven more as observers. As the humanitarian imperative that drives the two processes is the same, the ICBL hopes that the interest shown by these countries in the cluster munitions ban will also translate into concrete steps towards the Mine Ban Treaty. The ICBL urges countries considering to sign the new Cluster Munitions Treaty to also join the Mine Ban Treaty as both instruments address the same humanitarian concerns and will reinforce each other.

As we prepare to work to universalize the new Convention, we will continue to spare no effort to add new countries to the list of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, which has seen no additions in the past six months, despite positive signs from countries including Bahrain, Oman, Nepal and Laos.

In Bahrain, members of the executive as well as parliamentarians indicated to the ICBL on repeated occasions that there are no obstacles to accession. In Nepal, thanks to the tireless efforts of the national Campaign to Ban Landmines, statements made by representatives of all political sides lead us to hope that once the country's institutions are in place, accession will be a priority. As for Laos, in December 2007 it voted for the first time in favour of the UNGA resolution supporting universalization of the Mine Ban Treaty.

Mr Chairman, in previous statements the ICBL stigmatized Poland's decision to delay ratification until 2015. After an official visit in March this year, the ICBL believes that earlier ratification is possible. As Poland has already discarded these weapons – which do not feature in its defence doctrine and are under a moratorium – and plans to destroy over three quarters of its stockpiles in the next three to four years, ratification would have no concrete adverse effect on national security, making the link with the identification of alternatives unnecessary. The ICBL therefore urges Poland to ratify as soon as possible, thus proving the sincerity of its commitment to the humanitarian goals of the treaty, and enabling official recognition for the good practices it is already following.

The call for Poland to ratify before the Review Conference, and for Finland – the only other EU member still remaining outside the treaty – to also complete accession by that date was also echoed by the European Parliament in a resolution passed in December 2007.

In the coming months the ICBL will continue to place special emphasis on the regions with the lowest rates of adherence to the treaty, including Asia – building on recent initiatives taken by

Indonesia and Malaysia, with the support of Australia, Canada and Germany - the Middle East, and the Commonwealth of Independent States. We will also continue to work through our member organizations to universalize the mine ban norm among non-state armed groups, to ensure no further use of these weapons by anyone, ever.

Mr Chairman, we count on the present and future Presidencies of the MSP and on all States Parties to continue multiplying efforts to advance universalization.

Thank you.