



**ICRC**

**Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties  
to the  
Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

**Statement by  
Olivier Vodoz  
Vice-President of the  
International Committee of the Red Cross  
Geneva**

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Two decades have passed since the first bold calls were made to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines. At that time, anti-personnel landmines were considered normal, essential and irreplaceable. The killing and maiming of civilians that accompanied their use was viewed as “collateral damage”.

Asia was then, and today remains, particularly afflicted by this scourge. Minefields and cluster munitions have taken a terrible human toll, especially in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Viet Nam, Afghanistan and Pakistan. As can be seen every day in Cambodia, these insidious weapons continue destroying lives and disrupting communities long after the fighting has ended.

Thanks to the fledgling International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the vision of a world without anti-personnel landmines began to take hold. For the International Committee of the Red Cross, the turning point came precisely 20 years ago, when our war surgeons published data on injury patterns observed in our field hospitals on the Thai-Cambodian and Pakistan-Afghan borders. The evidence demonstrated unequivocally that anti-personnel landmines had created an “epidemic” of civilian casualties that needed to be stopped at its source.

How far we have come since then! With the support of civil society, you – the 158 States party to the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Convention, and States not yet bound by it but who nonetheless support the Convention's goals – can be proud of your many achievements.

Today, the global trade in anti-personnel landmines has stopped, except for sporadic cases. Almost 45 million anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, 18 countries have completed their mine-clearance obligations, and in countries where clearance continues, many hectares of fertile land continue to be released back to communities each year. Tens of thousands of landmine survivors have been helped to regain mobility and confidence and the number of new landmine victims has continued to fall. With Tuvalu and South Sudan joining the Convention this year, and three more States expected to adhere in 2012, the universalization of the Convention is set to continue.

These are true successes and our host, the Kingdom of Cambodia, is setting a laudable example in the field of mine action. Yet we cannot afford to be complacent. We must never forget that victims of anti-personnel mines are not just statistics. They are human beings, whose lives, and whose families' lives, are irreversibly changed by these horrific weapons. It is unacceptable that tens of thousands of people throughout the world remain unable to till their land or fetch water without seriously risking the loss of life or limb.

The ICRC is very disturbed by reports this year of the use of anti-personnel mines by four States and a number of non-State armed actors. We must work insistently to end this use, whether by States or by non-State armed groups. No one today can deny the immeasurable human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines, which can have devastating effects on the civilian population and obstruct economic development and reconstruction. Those who still claim a “need” for these devices should be urged to consider the limited military utility of such weapons compared with their humanitarian consequences. They must find alternatives.

Among the States Parties, a number of significant challenges remain in implementing the Convention. First and foremost, we must not forget the promise made to **landmine survivors** when the Convention was adopted – “to put an end” to the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines. Ending this suffering means more than immediate medical care; it means physical rehabilitation and social and economic inclusion in society. The ICRC is grateful for the generous support from many States and organizations for its work worldwide, especially for physical rehabilitation services and our Special Fund for the Disabled, which ensures that services continue after ICRC operations in a given country have ended. We also welcome the increased attention to victim assistance and disability issues at the national level in a number of States.

It is disappointing, however, that too many States still lack comprehensive data or a national plan to achieve tangible improvements in the services available to mine survivors and other persons with disabilities. It is essential that each State Party take further steps based on the *Cartagena Action Plan* to improve the lives of mine survivors within its own borders and abroad.

The ICRC also remains concerned that several States remain in non-compliance with their **stockpile-destruction** deadlines. While we understand that some of these States are now progressing with plans for stockpile destruction, the failure of any State to meet its Article 4 deadline is very unfortunate given the otherwise excellent record of respect by the States Parties for this obligation. Despite the harsh economic climate, the States concerned must make every effort to destroy all stockpiled mines as a matter of urgency in order to bring them back into compliance with the Convention.

Another matter of concern for the ICRC is the number of States that **retain stocks of anti-personnel mines** without any apparent reduction in their numbers. This raises the question of whether these mines are actually required for training purposes, as stipulated in Article 3 of the Convention. If not, they should be destroyed. The ICRC urges States retaining mines under Article 3 to regularly review their need for these weapons and to reduce the number of retained mines to the minimum absolutely necessary, as called for in point 56 of the *Cartagena Action Plan*.

**Mine clearance** remains one of the greatest challenges facing the Convention today. Fortunately, worldwide funding for mine action, including clearance, has remained consistent over recent years and many States are making substantial progress in meeting their clearance obligations. However, some 30 States Parties have been unable to meet their clearance deadlines and have requested an extension or indicated that they intend to request one. These include States with extremely high levels of contamination, for which clearance within 10 years was always a daunting, if not impossible, task. But they also include cases where contamination on a more limited scale has not been assigned adequate priority. Greater efforts are now needed to ensure that very few States need extensions in the future. States Parties must also be aware that failure to clear anti-personnel mines can constitute de facto use.

Apart from the practical challenges to meeting Article 5 clearance obligations, the States Parties at this meeting need to consider how to respond to a State that did not complete its Article 5 obligations or submit an extension request within its 10-year clearance deadline. Over the coming year, the States Parties should also adopt a position on the best way to deal with the discovery of new mined areas after the expiration of a State's clearance deadline. Such situations have now arisen but were not foreseen at the time the Convention was drafted. Creative thinking is required to find a solution that will set good precedents and firmly uphold the effectiveness and credibility of the Convention in the short and long-term.

Finally, I urge all present to invest more in **mobilizing resources** – human, financial and technical – in order to ensure both the clearance of mines and assistance for their victims. The ICRC is very pleased with the creation of the Standing Committee on Resources, Cooperation and Assistance at the last Meeting of States Parties. We must now make that forum an effective tool for identifying the resources crucial to the success of this Convention.

Twenty years ago, a global ban on anti-personnel mines seemed only a dream. But this dream is now becoming a reality. Some today might say that fully implementing the Convention's provisions is also a dream given present economic and other challenges. The community of States, civil society and international agencies that created this Convention must never accept this view. I am confident that this important Meeting of States Parties, rooted in the legacy of Cambodia's minefields and in the experience of its mine survivors, will be another step towards making dreams come true. The lives of countless individuals and the future of thousands of affected communities around the world depend on the fulfillment of the Convention's promises.