

TUN Chanareth



With the 11MSP, the Convention is returning to a place where the mine ban movement started two decades ago. It is an opportunity for the international community to recall how far this movement has come and how much work still remains to be done. It is also an opportunity to remember that there are many faces of the landmine movement in Cambodia. TUN Chanareth is one of these.



Photo: Mary Wareham

“Some people call me a ‘landmine victim’. So I am. So are you in a different way,” once said TUN Chanareth, who as a young soldier lost his legs to a landmine explosion. For over two decades, Chanareth, or “Reth” to his friends, has been representing the plight of landmine survivors in his native Cambodia and around the world. He has been in the forefront of non-governmental efforts to bring an end to the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

In 1994, TUN Chanareth and three other former soldiers wrote an open letter that began:

“Before, we were soldiers of four rival armies that laid mines that blew the legs and arms off one another [...] We beg the world to stop making mines. We beg the world to stop laying mines. We beg the world to give money for demining and development so that we can rebuild our lives, our communities, our villages and our countries again!”

TUN Chanareth then took his message to, first, the Pope and subsequently many other heads of States. As a result, he and hundreds of thousands of landmine survivors no longer need to “beg the world to stop making or laying mines,” neither do they have to beg for “assistance in rebuilding their lives.” Thanks to the Convention, there is now a legal ban on landmines and strong provisions that call for the “assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims.”

“Reth” continues to be active in the landmines movement, including by working with girls and boys with disabilities in Siem Reap and for advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities everywhere.

AP Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit