

Agenda Item 11: General Status and Operation of the Convention Statement by Canada on behalf of the Universalization Contact Group

The Contact Group is an informal and open-ended working group, traditionally meeting on the margins of the Meetings of States Parties and the meetings of the Standing Committees. This group is open to all states and organizations which wish to make active contributions to support cooperative efforts aimed at encouraging States to ratify or accede to the Ottawa Convention.

Over 20 States Parties from all regions of the world participated in meetings, as well as the ICBL, the ICRC, and the UN.

In keeping with tradition, the Contact Group met on Monday of this week to discuss a broad agenda, which represented the key areas for focus that emerged from our meetings in January and May of this year. I have the pleasure to report to this Meeting on the main outcomes of these discussions, which will form a basis for our ongoing work and actions:

1. The Contact Group confirmed the importance of giving due regard to and taking action with respect to those states which remain steadfast in their opposition to joining the Convention, yet which are of high political and humanitarian significance because of their status as producers, users or traders of anti-personnel mines. While many of these states are unlikely to join by the 2004 Review Conference the need for creative, coordinated and continued universalization efforts remains. Particular attention might be paid to those steadfast states in South East Asia, to those which have recently used anti-personnel mines, and to members of the Security Council.
2. In addition to placing a priority on producers and users of anti-personnel mines, the Contact Group recognized the ongoing importance of continuing efforts with those states identified as likely candidates to ratify or accede in time for the Review Conference. It was underscored that continuing these important efforts does not preclude our work on those difficult states as already referred to.
3. Approximately 25 states are likely candidates to join the Convention by 2004. It is therefore the view of the Coordinator of the Contact Group that the energetic application of universalization efforts could lead us to at least 145 States Parties by the time of the Review Conference.
4. The Contact Group also focussed on the ways to make use of a variety of multilateral and regional fora to further the messages of the Convention, and to secure new adherents. This is a strategy that has proven effective in the past, and the members of the Group will seek to build on the work already started in some fora, and to cooperatively look at ways to expand into appropriate fora where this work has not yet been inserted.
5. The Group took particular note of the need to work in partnership across all lines: states, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. In this regard, the "advocacy assets", including the in-country presence and influence, of

organizations such as the ICBL, the ICRC, and the United Nations were highlighted as providing important foundations on which others could build and collaborate with in their undertakings in specific countries.

6. The engagement of the militaries and Ministries of Defence remains of high importance, and thus the significance of military-to-military dialogue was reaffirmed by the Contact Group. Limited actions have been undertaken in this regard, and a need was identified for further work by increasing numbers of States Parties.

As Coordinator of this informal group, we would like to thank each of the participants for their activity, efforts and contributions. On behalf of all of the participants of the group, Canada would like to specifically extend our gratitude to the Implementation Support Unit for the ways it has worked, as consistent with its mandate, to provide a range of support to states, organizations, and the Contact Group's Coordinator in their universalization.

Universalization of the Ottawa Convention remains a key priority for Canada, and it is an honour to continue to work with all active parties on this matter.