



***FOURTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION
OF THE USE, STOCKPILING AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-
PERSONNEL MINES
AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION***

GENEVA, 16 TO 20 SEPTEMBER 2002

**Declaration by Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga
President of the Council of Foundation
Geneva International Centre
for Humanitarian Demining**

I was in Ottawa when the Convention banning anti-personnel mines was first signed five years ago. The time has thus come to start taking stock of the achievements and to focus on the work not yet done. It is also worthwhile to compare the status of affairs with the expectations we had during the short and very active Ottawa process.

The extraordinary short period of time to achieve 125 ratifications is an almost unprecedented success, despite the still missing important nations. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has become a norm of International Humanitarian Law much faster than we could expect it five years ago. It is important to note that the Convention has even changed the behaviour of those who have not yet ratified it. And even non-state actors have started to take commitments not to use anti-personnel landmines under the Geneva Call.

When assessing the success of the Convention we should less focus on formal aspects of the Treaty but more on the difference it makes in the real world:

- lives have been saved in the tens of thousands since its entry into force;
- victims have received better treatment and support;
- mined areas have been cleared and are now used for civilian purposes;
- stockpiles were destroyed and in most armed forces the use of landmines is no longer part of military doctrines.

Compliance with the core provisions of the Convention is good. This is not due to a verification regime and sanction mechanism, but to the ongoing commitment and co-operation of governments, international and non-governmental organisations. Future compliance will likewise depend on the strong commitment and close co-operation we have seen the last five years. Weakening this process would hamper the dynamic of the Convention and challenge its objectives.

The progress achieved thus far should not dwarf the enormous work still ahead. What we did is a beginning only; I said it in Ottawa: the treaty is a victory for humanity but only the beginning of a long way to a mine free world.

The preparation of the 2004 Review Conference is about to start and will rightly occupy a lot of our thinking the two years ahead.

Having been involved from the early days in the struggle against landmines, let me share with you some points for this forthcoming work:

The co-operation under the Convention met the expectations for the past years, but it will need a rehearsal to effectively address the work ahead.

When adapting and improving the process we should build on the many positive experiences of which the close co-operation of governments, international and non-governmental organisations is paramount. It has become so natural, that very often its positive effects in many practical areas are almost not perceived. We need not to reinvent the wheel.

We would fail and waste our best assets if we fell back in a routine administration of the Convention as legal document, as it happened unfortunately to other treaties. Therefore I call on you to make an early commitment that we exclude a fallback in routine administration.

The Ottawa Process has never lacked imagination. On the contrary: rather too many good ideas made it sometimes difficult to agree on the best ones. This will help us in defining the way ahead. We should rather early take stock of the promising avenues, and evaluate and assess them carefully. Their potential to help affected man, woman and children should be more important than anything else.

In view of the Review Conference I also think that a form of renewed commitment of governments and other actors to support the implementation of the treaty, and in particular the continued support to mine affected countries, is important and necessary.

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian demining is committed to contribute further in achieving the Convention's objectives. This is its "raison d'être".

I would like to give now - through you Mr. Chairman – the floor to the Director of the Centre for a couple of brief remarks.