

Statement of Canada, Coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group

Sixth Meeting of the States Parties Zagreb, Croatia November 29, 2005

In taking stock of progress and activities over the past year, we highlight the participation of twenty-five States not parties in the Nairobi Summit as observers -- many for the first time in the Ottawa Process. A number of observer States made noteworthy interventions underlining their unequivocal support for the goals of the Convention, and indicating their efforts to abide by its norms.

The Nairobi Action Plan lays out a focused course of action to intensify efforts to bring additional States into the Ottawa Convention. The Zagreb Progress Report holds States Parties to those commitments, measuring our efforts to-date and further prioritizing what needs to take place in the coming year to advance universalization of the Convention.

In the year that has passed since the Nairobi Summit, our community has done well. On behalf of the Universalization Contact Group, Canada takes this opportunity to welcome four new countries into the Convention. **Ethiopia** completed its ratification, bringing to ninety-eight percent the universalization rate in Sub-Saharan Africa. One country – **Somalia** – remains outside the Convention, but has indicated its intent to accede once a government is in place. We congratulate **Bhutan** and **Latvia** on their accession and **Vanuatu** on its ratification of the Convention. This brings to 147 the number of States that have embraced the Ottawa Convention as the definitive framework for leading us towards a mine-free world.

During the same period, several other States indicated that they are moving toward accession or ratification: **Ukraine**, **Haiti** and **Palau** completed internal approval processes, and are expected to deposit their instruments of ratification and accession in the very near future; the Government of **Indonesia** announced that an interdepartmental committee had agreed on a ratification text for its President's approval; and the **Federated States of Micronesia**'s Executive Branch is expected to submit an approved text for ratification by Congress in the near future. We look forward to welcoming these States into the Convention.

Some States not Parties, including **China** and **Mongolia** announced that they are considering submitting a voluntary Article 7 transparency report. **Sri Lanka** for the first time submitted such a voluntary report in June 2005; however, it did not include information regarding stockpiled mines. We encourage Sri Lanka's submission of the completed report to take full advantage of this useful transparency tool. We encourage States not Parties to use such interim measures to advance accession or ratification, with the expectation that the report will assist them in moving more rapidly toward completing this process.

Over the past year, there have been several initiatives to advance universal adherence to the Convention. As has become the tradition in this community, this was a result of the continued joint efforts of States Parties,

multilateral organizations, the United Nations, International Committee of the Red Cross and of course the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. We highlight the important regional workshop for **Central Asia and Caucasus** countries co-hosted by **Georgia** and the OSCE, organized by the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF), and co-sponsored by Canada, the Netherlands and Slovenia. We were pleased to co-organize a seminar in **Libya** in May, and to conduct universalization missions to **Indonesia, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan, Singapore and Vietnam**. Furthermore, we note the missions conducted by the ICBL to **Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Georgia, Indonesia, Libya, Mongolia and Singapore**. Such efforts are the foundation for our continued success.

We take this opportunity to underline the universalization priorities identified in the Zagreb Progress Report, for the coming year and beyond. There are several states that have indicated that they are close to completing ratification or accession. The concerted efforts of all States Parties are needed, in order to ensure that these States are appropriately supported in these efforts – and in particular those signatories who have yet to ratify the Convention. In the meantime, however, we cannot relent in our engagement of the more challenging universalization cases: those in regions where adherence to the Convention is low; and those who continue to use, produce and stockpile anti-personnel mines. We request that a special effort be undertaken to engage States not Parties who have been reported by the Landmine Monitor Report to have used mines in the past year: **Burma, Nepal and Russia**.

We, the States Parties, have undertaken a clear commitment to this critical area of activity in the preamble to the Ottawa Convention, in the Nairobi Action Plan, and now in the Zagreb Progress Report. Among other efforts, we support the suggestion by Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium, during the opening ceremonies, urging all States Parties to include this issue in the agenda for all high-level bilateral meetings between their Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence and those of States not Parties. Only through continued and persistent efforts in this regard can we reach the goal of the highest rate of universalization attainable.

We commend the unwavering and diligent work of the ICBL, and express our support for efforts to universalize the norms of the Convention, as well as the Convention itself. In this regard, we encourage and support Geneva Call's work with non-state actors, in close and cooperative consultation with State governments.

In closing, we express our gratitude to Jordan and New Zealand for their partnership and cooperation in facilitating regional universalization discussions this week as a means of generating regionally led initiatives. We invite all those interested in advancing this important area of the Action Plan to the Universalization Contact Group meeting this Thursday at one o'clock in the Kumrovec Room.