

International Campaign to Ban Landmines
Statement during the General Exchange of Views
Delivered by Steve Goose, Head of Delegation
Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
Geneva, 18 September 2006

Thank you Madame President. The ICBL looks forward to working closely with you over the course of the next year. It is a year we view as being of critical importance in the life of the Mine Ban Treaty. In many ways, we will likely discover in the coming year if the beautiful words of the treaty are to become the reality that we have all pledged to bring about: a mine-free world in which the needs of landmine survivors are fully met.

We will likely discover in the coming year which States Parties are going to meet the first mine clearance deadlines in 2009, and which are not. It will become more clear which States Parties are making their best efforts to meet the deadline, and which are not. We will find out if States Parties are prepared to create a process for asking for and reviewing requests for extensions of deadlines that will ensure the credibility of the treaty remains intact – or whether States Parties will treat this vital treaty obligation, this vital humanitarian imperative, as a feel-good objective to be dealt with “all-in-good-time.” The ICBL has identified at least 13 countries with deadlines in 2009 and 2010 that do not appear to be on course to complete clearance.

We will likely discover in the coming year if some key countries with very large stockpiles of antipersonnel mines, and some countries that have recently emerged from or are still engaged in conflict, will maintain the stellar record of compliance with the treaty’s stockpile destruction deadlines. Among those with 2007 and early 2008 deadlines are Angola, Afghanistan, Belarus, Greece, Serbia, Turkey, Burundi and Sudan. Some appear to be on track to meet their deadlines, others do not.

We will likely discover in the coming year if the VA 24 initiative will bear fruit, or whether it turns out to be a paper exercise. While some progress is being made, survivors continue to face many of the same problems as in previous years, including inadequate access to care, lack of variety and effectiveness of assistance,

inadequate capacity, lack of rights implementation, and insufficient funding for victim assistance programs.

We will likely discover in the coming year if States Parties are prepared to sustain the political and financial commitment that is necessary to achieve the goals stated in the Mine Ban Treaty and the Nairobi Action Plan. More specifically we will find out if the significant decrease in donor contributions to global mine action in 2005—the first time ever that a decrease has been recorded—is an aberration or the start of a highly disturbing trend.

Madame President, the ICBL hopes that there will be concrete outcomes from this week of work at the 7th Meeting of States Parties that will pave the way for success in 2007 and beyond.

Among the desired outcomes this week are the following:

- That states agree on a process for Article 5 extension requests, a process that will ensure that requests for mine clearance deadline extensions are made only as a last resort and that extensions are granted for the shortest period possible to states showing good faith in their efforts to meet the deadline;
- That states agree on a template for requesting extensions;
- That states agree on the proposal for a common declaration and process on Article 5 completion;
- That both donor and affected countries make renewed financial and political commitments to clear mines as soon as possible and to support and protect the rights of landmine survivors;
- That states recognize the need in the coming year to deal more effectively with lingering implementation and compliance issues, including the large number of states that have not undertaken national implementation measures as required by Article 9; the large number of states that are keeping excessive numbers of antipersonnel mines under the Article 3

exception and/or are not using them for the permitted purposes; the lack of clarity and agreement among States Parties about the interpretation and implementation of Article 1 (especially regarding the prohibition on assistance with banned acts) and Article 2 (especially regarding antivehicle mines with overly sensitive fuzes or antihandling devices); and late or non-existent Article 7 reporting;

- That states recognize the need to report more consistently on antipersonnel mines discovered, seized or turned in after the completion of stockpile destruction programs, including through a revised Article 7 Form G;
- That States Parties condemn in increasingly strong terms any ongoing use, production, trade or stockpiling of antipersonnel mines by any government or non-state armed group; and that States Parties enhance efforts to engage non-state armed groups in a ban on antipersonnel mines;
- That countries not yet party to the treaty make statements about their progress toward joining, and the steps they are taking consistent with the treaty and the emerging international norm against the weapon;

Madame President, we have made available to all delegations copies of our *Landmine Monitor Report 2006*, the eighth in the annual series. This comprehensive publication shows that overall implementation of and compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty is impressive, and that more generally, the indicators of progress in eliminating antipersonnel mines are positive. But there have also been some disturbing developments that need to be addressed by States Parties as a matter of priority. I will highlight some of the Landmine Monitor findings today, and ICBL members will elaborate on others during interventions later this week.

More land was demined in 2005 than ever before, more than 740 square kilometers, an area the size of New York City. More than 470,000 mines and 3.75 million other explosive devices were cleared. Guatemala and Suriname completed clearance of all their minefields. Mine risk education programs were recorded in 60 countries, with new MRE projects and activities in 26 of those countries. In a number of countries, there were notable efforts to improve

survivor assistance, including data collection, needs-based planning, interministerial coordination, and national ownership.

However, international funding for mine action fell for the first time in 2005. Donors provided \$376 million, the second highest level ever, but a decrease of \$23 million (about 6 percent) from the previous year. Seventy-eight countries are still mine-affected, and new mine and UXO casualties were recorded in 58 countries in 2005.

The number of reported casualties increased to 7,328 in 2005, up about 11 percent, mostly due to expanded conflict in a number of countries. Because many casualties go unreported, Landmine Monitor estimates the true number to be some 15,000-20,000 each year. There may be one-half million mine survivors alive today. Yet survivor assistance programs remain inadequate in far too many of the countries with new casualties in 2005.

Although much more remains to be done in terms of mine action and survivor assistance, clearly the stigma against antipersonnel mines is firmly taking hold throughout the world. Even most of those who have not yet joined the Mine Ban Treaty are largely abiding by its provisions.

There was a decrease in use of antipersonnel mines by both government and rebel forces in 2005 and the first half of 2006. Only three governments are confirmed to have used antipersonnel mines in that period: Burma (Myanmar), Nepal, and Russia, with the most extensive use in Burma. Use in Nepal halted with the May 2006 cease-fire, and both the government and the Maoists agreed to a Code of Conduct that prohibits use of landmines. As recently as the year 2000, at least 13 governments were actively laying antipersonnel mines.

Landmine Monitor recorded use of antipersonnel mines, or antipersonnel mine-like improvised explosive devices, by non-state armed groups in at least 10 countries in 2005-2006: Burma, Burundi, Colombia, Guinea-Bissau, India, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia (Chechnya), and Somalia. Guinea-Bissau was the only addition to the list, due to new mine-laying by rebels from Senegal, while four countries were removed: Georgia, the Philippines, Turkey, and Uganda. In the year 2000, rebels groups used antipersonnel mines in at least 18 countries.

There were no confirmed instances of antipersonnel mine transfers in 2005 and 2006. However, in May 2006, the U.N. arms embargo monitoring group on Somalia reported that the government of Eritrea had delivered 1,000 antipersonnel mines to militant fundamentalists in Somalia. Eritrea, which has officially declared that it no longer possesses any antipersonnel mines, strongly denied the charge.

In the past year, four more States Parties have reported completion of destruction of their antipersonnel mine stockpiles: Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, Algeria, and Democratic Republic of Congo; 74 States Parties have completed stock destruction, and only 13 still have stocks to destroy. All together, States Parties have destroyed nearly 40 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines.

The ICBL welcomes Ukraine, Haiti, Cook Islands, and Brunei as new members of the Mine Ban Treaty since the last Meeting of States Parties, bringing the total to 151 States Parties, more than three-quarters of the world's nations. It is notable that Ukraine has now committed to destroying the world's fourth biggest stockpile of antipersonnel mines within four years.

Yet, 44 countries are not party to the treaty, including thirteen antipersonnel mine producers. Those outside the treaty hold an estimated 160 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines.

In closing, Madame President, I would like to remind everyone that we are nearing the ten-year anniversary of Canada's call in October 1996 for rapid negotiation of a treaty comprehensively banning antipersonnel mines, a call embraced by so many countries. We have come a very long way since then, more rapidly and more effectively than perhaps anyone would have predicted. But some of the biggest hurdles toward a truly global ban on antipersonnel mines, and a mine-free world in which the needs of survivors are met, are still before us. We must continue to work together to ensure that this effort receives the priority and the resources needed to make the vision of ten years ago a reality. Thank you.