



**Seventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

Geneva, 18 to 22 September 2006

**Statement by Ambassador Stephan Nellen
Director, Geneva International Centre
for Humanitarian Demining**

Madam President,

Let me first congratulate you for your election as the new President of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Please be assured that the GICHD will make every possible effort to support your Presidency and the activities you will be promoting over the next fifteen months.

Let me also thank and congratulate the Government of Switzerland for being the host of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to Mine Ban Convention, and for having organised a very lively opening ceremony.

Two years after the First Review Conference in Nairobi, we can positively assess the various activities and operations which have been taken by States Parties to implement the Summit's recommendations and decisions.

The Geneva Progress Report, like the Zagreb Progress Report of 2005, is another important landmark taking stock of the many accomplishments

States Parties have achieved over the last ten months. Let me welcome Brunei Darrusalam, the Cooks Islands, Haiti and Ukraine who have joined the Mine Ban Convention since the Sixth Meeting of States Parties in Zagreb. I am also pleased that several other countries are here as observers. We have noted that they already abide by their humanitarian obligations, and have spontaneously provided assistance to fellow countries affected by landmines. Continued efforts for a total ban on landmines and for a full universalisation of the Convention, are a moral duty for all of us.

The GICHD, through the Implementation Support Unit, as mandated by the States Parties, is ready to assist all States Parties and those countries which have made significant progress in their internal processes towards ratification or accession, by making available its knowledge and expertise.

With respect to the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, the GICHD commends in particular the Democratic Republic of Congo, Latvia and Ukraine for having completed their programmes. The Centre is ready to assist the twelve States Parties which still have to destroy stockpiled anti-personnel mines.

Next to the universalisation of the AP MBC, meeting the clearance deadlines of 2009 and beyond will be our major challenge for the years to come. By providing the Information Management System of Mine Action (IMSMA) to more than forty mine action programmes around the world, the GICHD supports the efforts of mine affected countries, in particular when it comes to developing national plans and programmes. IMSMA Version 4, an important progress over the previous versions, is currently under development and pilot versions have been installed in a number of programmes. The overall development is on schedule, and the plan is to finalize instalment of the new version in all programmes by the end of 2007. IMSMA V4 incorporates the latest technology – like data-gathering and transfer through handheld devices – and it is based on lessons learned by users in the field.

The Centre is highly supportive of the general mine clearance efforts of States Parties by developing, among other things, sound mine risk education (MRE) tools and more efficient mine action technologies.

On the first point, the Centre supported UNICEF by producing twelve guidebooks that provide advice, tools and guidance to States Parties and to others undertake MRE programmes compliant with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). On the second point, the GICHD and UNMAS convened a meeting of technology experts in February this year. The workshop allowed field practitioners to exchange of views on the latest trends in mine action technology, and explored ways and means on how to assist field practitioners in selecting the available technology for their specific needs.

In addition, the Centre has embarked on a major study aimed at developing and implementing a risk management methodology, which will allow a faster and more efficient land release process, compared to today's procedures. On Thursday 21 September 2006, the GICHD will hold a side meeting on '*Accelerating the Release of Suspected Mined Land*'. The briefing and discussion will focus on how to accelerate the release of 'suspected' land by methods other than full clearance, in order to allow States Parties to more efficiently meet their clearance deadlines.

The Centre will continue its work on the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) in conjunction with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). The development of new standards, and the review of current ones will remain high on our agenda. Similarly, the review of the standards in relation to Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and the entry into force of the ERW Protocol V on 12 November 2005 will be important activities in the months ahead. Moreover, the Centre will provide increased assistance to national authorities for developing national mine action standards and/or translating them into local languages. The development of National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) might become an important criteria for assessing a country's decisiveness to fulfil its Article 5 obligations when requesting an

extension. By the end of October 2006, the GICHD will be able to provide a complete translation of current IMAS into Russian.

Madam President,

Let me conclude by underlining that the Centre will support all mine action related efforts in its areas of expertise, with the general aim of making mine action and ERW clearance safer, faster, cheaper and more efficient. The thought that children, women and men are facing a daily threat of anti-personnel landmines, is guiding the work of the GICHD when it is assisting States Parties in their endeavours to develop comprehensive national plans and to meet their objectives in alleviating the suffering of landmine survivors and guaranteeing their economic reintegration. Greater synergies can be achieved by having a common approach to landmines and ERW clearance.

Finally, in order to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of mine action, the GICHD will do its utmost to ensure that mine action remains a priority in humanitarian policies. In addition, the Centre will support the efforts of Canada and other partners who want to deepen reflection and discussions on ways and means to include mine action into development plans and programmes at UN, regional, national and sub-national level. The official launch of the Contact Group on Linking Mine Action to Development (LMAD) this Wednesday will be a further step in this direction.

I hope that these remarks were helpful in showing how the GICHD can assist States Parties in implementing the obligations contained in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Nairobi Action Plan.

Thank you very much.
