



**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 Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga
President of the Geneva International Centre
for Humanitarian Demining
at the Opening Session**

We join here today on the **Ninth Anniversary** of the adoption of the Treaty text banning anti-personnel mines at the diplomatic conference of Oslo. We have at this State-Parties 7th meeting – as we did then – **not to forget the victims**. This is all the more so if we consider the human disaster caused by landmines and other explosive remnants of war in the **recent Middle East armed conflict**. It is for us a moral obligation to continue to work to reduce the number of casualties and to assist landmine survivors, in particular in those State Parties who are reporting serious challenges with their medical and rehabilitation facilities, as well as with the socio-economic reintegration.

Our **landmine ban family**, again enlarged and also hosting a number of observers abiding largely by the humanitarian conventional obligations, **meets again in this unique city of Geneva** – the world centre of the fight against landmines and other remnants of war on the invitation of the Swiss Government, who has to be congratulated, also for the organisation of such a diverse opening ceremony. This will contribute to **enhance the fervour of States and people** to relentlessly continue the engagement in mine action.

We have in the past years made **significant progress** in the stockpile destruction, but **too much human suffering remains**, too much work still lies ahead and too many problems remain yet unresolved. Identifying, marking and fencing of suspected hazardous areas and, more importantly, the **complete clearance of all known mined areas have indeed become the overriding challenge** to be addressed.

Enormous efforts are required to meet the ten-year deadline. Countries embarked in this crucial work **must be supported more decisively** with any possible means. Let us take very seriously the **implementation of the Art. 5** provisions, particularly the deadlines foreseen there. It will have to be done in **a spirit of partnership and cooperation**, a major characteristic of our Convention. The **universalisation** of the total ban of the Convention, including by non-State armed groups, requires continuous attention, also as a **moral obligation to the victims**. Let me in this connection commend the work of the Geneva Call.

Mine action has to remain a **priority in humanitarian policies as well as in development plans** and programmes, where clearance of mined areas and assistance to victims, will contribute in the achievement of the UN Millenium Development Goals.

I was a fortnight ago in **Assisi** in Italy, where we launched on 5 September the inter-religious Peace Appeal, saying inter alia: *“War is not unavoidable. Religions never justify hatred and violence. We hope for a world of peace. Nothing is lost through dialogue, everything is possible with peace! War never again. May God grant to the world the wonderful gift of peace...”* and let me add, - a world free from landmines !
