

**International Campaign to Ban Landmines**  
**Statement during the General Exchange of Views**  
**Eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty**  
**Dead Sea, Jordan**  
**18 November 2007**

**Delivered by Steve Goose, Human Rights Watch, Head of Delegation**

Thank you Mr. President.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is here in full force in Jordan. More than 250 campaigners from more than 60 countries are participating this week, including 25 landmine survivors and 50 youth advocates. This is a strong sign of the ongoing commitment of civil society to the total eradication of antipersonnel mines and to ensuring that the rights and needs of affected individuals and communities are met. Ten years after the negotiation and signing of the Mine Ban Treaty, our determination to finish the job is unwavering.

We are especially pleased that the 8<sup>th</sup> annual meeting is being held in Jordan. The tradition of holding the meetings in a mine-affected country at least every other year is an important one that keeps all of us grounded in the realities of our collective work and reminds us of our common purpose. It is all the more encouraging that Jordan will not be mine-contaminated much longer. In this wonderful country we can see first hand both the need for the Mine Ban Treaty, and the positive impact that it can have. As Prince Mired has stressed many times, *it can be done*.

The ICBL's slogan in this year of the tenth anniversary is "A success in progress." There is no denying the success when 80 percent of the world's countries are party to the treaty, and the number of members grows each year. Our congratulations to Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, Montenegro, and just this morning Palau -- some very important additions to our mine ban family. We look forward to working with you to help you meet the treaty's obligations and end the suffering caused by antipersonnel mines.

There is no denying the success when new use of antipersonnel mines is minimal compared to the past, when trade in the weapon is almost non-existent, when 81 countries have destroyed their stocks, when record amounts of land are being cleared or released year after year, and when the number of new mine casualties each year has been reduced by half or even more.

But so much remains to be done. One of the greatest strengths of the Mine Ban Treaty Process over the past ten years has been the willingness and ability of States Parties, in cooperation with ICBL and other partners, to recognize the challenges and plan together how to overcome them, rather than trying to minimize or ignore problems.

All of us must deal with many other important issues and deserving priorities, but it would be tragic if we cannot sustain the political will to finish this "success in progress."

We are in fact in a crucial and difficult phase, and not just taking care of the last few loose ends of a completed project.

At this point in the life of the treaty, it is evident that our intense focus must be the obligation to clear mined areas as soon as possible and to meet the ten-year deadlines. At the moment, it appears that about half of the 29 countries with deadlines in 2009 and 2010 will not make it. That should be highly disturbing, especially since States Parties set the goal just three years ago in Nairobi at the First Review Conference, of "few, if any" states failing to meet their deadlines.

The first priority then should be trying to reduce the projected number of 14 states missing deadlines in 2009 and 2010, and to live up to "few, if any" for 2011 and beyond. The next priority should be ensuring the extension request process is one that enhances the credibility of the Mine Ban Treaty, and not lessens it. That means that the requests themselves must be detailed and forthright, that a rigorous review of the requests must occur, that rubber-stamped, automatic extensions are not granted, and that the extensions are for the shortest time possible. Every day that goes by without clearing the mines is another day that an innocent person might step on them.

The other major challenge, which by its nature must be long-term, is survivor assistance. The good news is Landmine Monitor registered the lowest number of new recorded casualties in 2006 of any previous year: 5,751. The bad news is we have identified nearly one-half million survivors, and they still face a now familiar litany of problems: inadequate access to care, a lack of variety and effectiveness of assistance, inadequate capacity, lack of rights implementation, and insufficient funding for victim assistance programs.

Thanks in large part to the VA 24 process, we know much more about problems and progress than in the past, but data collection is still discouragingly inadequate. Landmine Monitor has found that only 11 of the VA 24 have made sufficient progress in the past year. Economic reintegration efforts, the number one priority of survivors themselves, are particularly weak. The lack of national capacity and ownership is still a major impediment for improvement.

Missed clearance deadlines and inadequate survivor assistance are not the only implementation and compliance concerns. At the April intersessionals, the ICBL sharply criticized Venezuela for its statements indicating that it had not started clearance around military bases because the mines were still serving a military function, providing protection against Colombian rebels, and no alternative was available. This would seemingly constitute "use" of antipersonnel mines and therefore be a violation of the treaty. It appears there are other examples of States Parties continuing to use antipersonnel mines they laid in the past to serve an ongoing military or strategic purpose.

We have expressed deep concern about several reports of the UN arms embargo monitoring group for Somalia that include detailed allegations of transfers of

antipersonnel mines from Eritrea and Ethiopia to factions in Somalia. The two States Parties have strongly denied the allegations, but, according to the UN monitoring group, this is a pattern and not isolated incidents. This matter deserves in depth consideration by all States Parties.

We are also troubled by the fact that two States Parties missed their stockpile destruction deadlines, and others appear to be in danger of doing so. Another growing compliance concern is what appears to be widespread abuse of the exception in Article 3 allowing for retention of mines for training and development purposes. Many States Parties are retaining more antipersonnel mines than “absolutely necessary” and are not using the retained mines for the permitted purposes.

Mr. President, with respect to the practical matters of this meeting, we would like to offer our praise and support for the Dead Sea Progress Report, and urge states to strive to fulfill its objectives, in keeping with the Nairobi Action Plan of 2004. We also urge formal acceptance of the extension template, and of the proposal for amending the Article 7 reporting format to facilitate reporting on stockpiled mines newly discovered and destroyed.

Mr. President, as most of you know, the ICBL has recently released the ninth edition of its annual Landmine Monitor Report. Many of the key findings of this year’s report will be integrated into the thematic interventions that ICBL members will be making during the course of this week. While there are many concerns and challenges, the big picture is very encouraging. In addition to the number of new recorded casualties being the lowest ever in 2006, the amount of land cleared was the highest ever (450 square kilometers), the level of donor funding was the highest ever (\$475 million, or \$100 million more than the previous year) and there was confirmed new use of antipersonnel mines by just two governments (Myanmar and Russia) and by non-state armed groups in just eight countries, both the lowest numbers ever.

We have been pleased that a number of speakers have referred to the cluster munition issue. Indeed, it is closely related matter, one that has already been part of the work of the Mine Ban Treaty, especially through mine action and victim assistance efforts. But, just as was the case with antipersonnel mines ten years ago, more needs to be done than post-conflict clean-up and aid to those maimed by the weapon. Use of cluster munitions must be stopped, and the massive existing stockpiles must be destroyed. All States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty—given their demonstrated commitment to protecting civilian populations from the effects of war, both during and after armed conflict—should be part of the Oslo Process aimed at a new international treaty in 2008 prohibiting cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. All of you should be going to Vienna on December 5-7 to discuss the treaty text, as well as Wellington in February 2008, and the final negotiations in Dublin in May 2008.

Advancement in implementing these crucial areas of the Mine Ban Treaty, combined with adoption of a new treaty prohibiting cluster munitions, would make 2008 one of the

most memorable years of all of our lives – because it will save so many lives for so many years to come.

Thank you.