

**International Campaign to Ban Landmines**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty**  
**Dead Sea, Jordan**  
**18 November 2007**

**ICBL statement on universalization –delivered by Ayman Sorour**

Your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates

The ICBL wishes to congratulate the government of Palau for announcing today its accession to the Mine Ban Treaty

As we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of the day when the treaty was signed almost ten years ago, we look back and reflect on this past decade and have no doubt that it has been a success. A weapon that was then commonly used by almost every army in the world has been banned on account of its intolerable humanitarian consequences and the vast majority – 80% - of the world's states have decided to renounce its use forever. With the exception of only two countries – Myanmar/Burma and Russia – even those who have not agreed to be bound by the treaty are largely abiding by the mine ban norm and fear the stigma attached to the use of antipersonnel mines.

However we cannot afford to rest on our laurels yet. The treaty is still a “success in progress”, and its undeniable achievements cannot be secured nor strengthened until the last state has joined the treaty and all mine use by any other actor ceases forever.

The ICBL is pleased to welcome here today the five countries that have joined the treaty since the last Meeting of States Parties: Palau, Indonesia – one of the original signatories – Montenegro, and two countries from the region that hosts us: Kuwait and Iraq.

These two accessions have brought the number of states parties in the Middle East and North Africa up to seven and we hope that they will spark new accessions by setting the example that even in a politically volatile and tense region it is possible - and indeed necessary – to respond to humanitarian needs rather than defer to outdated and questionable military desires.

The good news from these countries came at a time when the ICBL network was sparing no effort to engage with governments in the region. Over the past year, ICBL delegates visited Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman. The feedback and indications we received make us optimistic that we might be soon welcoming new States Parties from the Gulf region. In Bahrain, during an ICBL seminar on 1 November, the Council of representatives issued a strong call for the government to submit a draft law for accession.

We are happy to see in this room a number of representatives from governments in the region and we hope to see the encouraging signs blossom into concrete action. The MSP in Jordan has provided us with a special opportunity to bring the Middle East and North Africa into the spotlight, but our work in the region will not end when we leave the Dead Sea. The ICBL is planning follow up activities in the countries we have visited as well as others.

We are also pleased to announce the **launch of a new website** ([www.mena-protection.org](http://www.mena-protection.org)) on the landmine issue in Arabic. This comprehensive on-line resource on the issue, with a strong regional focus, is intended as a tool to raise awareness in the Arabic-speaking world and support universalization efforts.

ICBL initiatives on the universalization front were not confined to the Middle East but extended to other regions with low rates of adherence to the treaty. In the Commonwealth of Independent States, ICBL members participated in activities in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, while in Asia advocacy missions were conducted to India and Nepal. In Nepal the ICBL delegation was pleased to learn about steps being made to address the landmine crisis caused by years of conflict and received assurances from the government and main political parties, including the Maoists (CPN) that they support a total ban on antipersonnel mines, and wish to see Nepal accede to the Treaty as soon as the current process of political transition is over.

At the global level, we have been working on strengthening support for the annual UNGA resolution on universalization of the treaty and for the first time the ICBL sent a representative to the First Committee meetings in New York to engage with States not Parties on the issue and complement the advocacy work carried out by the President of the 7MSP, Australia.

More than one year of advocacy activities to influence non-state armed groups in the disputed region of Kashmir, carried out in partnership with Kashmiri ICBL members, culminated in October with the United Jihad Council – which gathers 13 Kashmiri armed groups and five non Kashmiri ones – issuing a declaration renouncing the use of landmines which they consider equivalent to blind terror.

We see this as yet another sign of the growing acceptance of the norm which prohibits antipersonnel mines because of their indiscriminate nature. We shall continue to work to strengthen that norm and to ensure that the last 39 countries remaining outside the treaty finally come on board.

In the year of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the treaty's signature we call on all countries to show the vision and courage to put the interests of human lives first, and we particularly urge the last two remaining signatories, Poland and the Marshall Islands to finally ratify the treaty and keep the promise they made ten years ago before the eyes of the world.

Thank you.