

**Eight Meeting of the States Parties to the
Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines
Dead Sea, 18-22 November 2007**

ICRC Statement on universalization

Thank you Mr. President.

On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross, let me begin by joining the previous speakers in warmly welcoming the three States that have ratified the Convention since our last intersessional meetings in April. We are delighted that Kuwait, Iraq and Palau formally committed themselves to the convention's comprehensive ban on anti-personnel landmines. The ICRC would like to congratulate these countries for the steps they have taken to protect their population from past and future landmine contamination and for the inspiration they have provided to others to do the same.

The ICRC witnessed renewed commitments throughout the Middle East during the two workshops organised this year in Kuwait City for the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council and in Tunis for the States of the Maghreb. Hope for a future without landmines is being born in the Middle East; we hope that further States from this region will soon be in a position to accede to the Convention.

These ratifications and achievements are also the result of your personal engagement Mr. President in raising the profile of this convention throughout the Middle East.

We also welcome the steps taken by Mongolia to join the Convention in the near future and commend the filing of a voluntary transparency report by this country this year.

Mr. President, the adherence of all States to the Ottawa Convention remains an important goal for the ICRC. Beyond this specific goal, an understanding has emerged among States Parties that universalization of the convention means more than adherence of all States, it also implies the universal observance of the anti-personnel mine ban norm by non-states armed groups. This understanding is stated notably in action 7 of the Nairobi Action Plan.

According to Landmine Monitor 2007, the use of anti-personnel mines by non states armed groups is far more widespread than the use of them by government forces. Various armed groups used anti-personnel mines in 2006 in at least 8 States. 3 of these States are already party to the Convention. This highlights the fact that the presence of these armed groups should not prevent the other five states from joining the treaty. Respect for the treaty's fundamental humanitarian objectives as with other International humanitarian law rules is not based on reciprocity but rather on the need to protect civilians from the effect of armed conflicts.

Ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines is a purely humanitarian objective and this objective must not be impeded by political considerations. In its dialogue with non-state armed groups, as well as with the armed forces of the concerned States, the ICRC urges respect for international humanitarian law and encourages respect for the anti-personnel mine ban norm. We would like to commend efforts made by States Parties, the ICBL and Geneva Call to encourage non states armed groups to cease using anti-personnel mines.

The ICRC will continue to fulfil its commitment to ensure the universalization of this Convention, particularly in under-represented region and to promote respect for its provisions by all parties to armed conflicts.