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**Eighth 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
Dead Sea, 18 to 22 November 2007**

**Statement by Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga
President of the Geneva International Centre
for Humanitarian Demining**

Opening Session

Dear Friends,

We meet here at the Dead Sea in Jordan, a country known for its exemplary role in mine action, that has warmly to be congratulated. Thank you, Your Royal Highness Prince Mired, for your so generous hospitality. Ten years have passed since the adoption of the Treaty banning anti-personal mines. Our Convention is strong, with important achievements on mine destruction, victims assistance and progress in universalisation. Let me here welcome those representatives of States who joined the Convention in the last year. Their decision and their commitment to our common endeavours is of paramount importance. Let me therefore recall the terrible legacy of minefields and other explosive remnants of war in this region, I mean the Middle East and North Africa.

There are fundamental issues at this gathering which deserve our relentless attention and even more so vigorous action, such as

- ° socio-economic reintegration of victims;
- ° still stockpile destruction deadlines;
- ° involvement of Non State Armed Groups in banning anti-personnel mines;
- ° the fulfilment of obligations under Article 5 by 2009, and
- ° the fulfilment, now and ever, of obligations under Article 6.

We have a moral obligation to continue to work in reducing the number of casualties from landmines and to assist survivors in their socio-economic reintegration. Assisting the States most in need in fulfilling their victim assistance responsibilities in the period leading up to the Second Review Conference will be topical. We need to be SMART and act even SMARTer, with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound objectives. Let me underline that our efforts for landmine victims will also be profitable to survivors of other explosive remnants of war, in particular cluster munitions.

Stockpile destruction of anti-personnel mines is considered among the core achievements of the Convention, with 40 million stockpiled mines destroyed. But serious challenges remain. Several countries need the support of all the Mine Action community for the destruction of their stockpiled mines, be it conventional, or mines which pose a technical problem at destruction.

On this matter, and in general on the overall landmine problem, let me salute the relentless action of Geneva Call and of the ICBL in bringing the key principles of our Convention to the attention of Non State Armed Groups. Concrete actions, such as stockpile destruction and risk education to the civilian population, shall be supported in all instances, as long as they are inspired by humanitarian principles.

Let me also indeed welcome the enormous efforts underway to meet the ten-year clearance deadline in 2009. All of us, with our means and possibilities, - and namely the GICHD and our ISU – are embarked in this crucial work and must support the implementation of the Article 5 provisions, particularly the deadlines foreseen there. 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.

Last but by all means not least, I consider the provisions of Article 6 of the Convention on the different aspects of international cooperation and assistance of paramount importance. Let us remember that, in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, each State Party has the right to seek and receive assistance from other State Parties. This relates to all obligations of the Treaty ; they are very well known to us. We cannot allow the interest of the donor community to fade away and this in particular to the detriment of those countries which are not in the centre of attention of the international community, while still confronted with acute mine problems.

Let me conclude by underlining the very nature of Mine Action: focus, first and foremost, on the humanitarian principles contained in the Oslo/Ottawa Accord. But Mine Action in the largest sense of the word has to become also a priority in development plans and programmes, including health policy, where clearance of mined areas and assistance to victims will contribute in the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Dear Friends of the Mine Action Community, I shall say it again and again we have to be prepared to act.

RES, NON VERBA ! – Deeds, not Words !
