



A Mine-Free World, Mission Possible!



Press Release

23rd Feb – 2009, Kabul, Afghanistan – Ten years after the historic treaty banning antipersonnel mines became binding international law, campaigners in some 50 countries around the globe are taking action this week to once again draw the world's attention to the horrific consequences of landmines and to call for renewed efforts toward a mine-free world.

“The Mine Ban Treaty has made a major difference on the ground in dozens of mine-affected countries, but despite the successes to date, too many people's lives remain impacted by uncleared minefields, too many mine survivors are denied decent living conditions, and too many mines are still stockpiled,” said Sylvie Brigot, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

“We always knew that pursuing a mine-free world would be a long-term mission, but it can be done. States Parties need to recommit themselves to doing everything in their power to end the suffering caused by these weapons. This is ‘mission possible’.”

To date, 156 states have joined the treaty and, as reported by the ICBL's Landmine Monitor the stigma attached to the use of antipersonnel mines means that only two governments – Burma (Myanmar) and Russia – and a handful of non-state armed groups employed these weapons in the past few years. Some 42 million antipersonnel mines have been destroyed from stockpiles since 1997; only 13 of the more than 50 countries that manufactured antipersonnel mines in the early '90s still have a production capacity; trade in antipersonnel mines has virtually stopped; and large tracts of land have been cleared and returned to productive use.

However, despite the goodwill and continued partnership between governments and civil society, the task of ensuring full compliance by Mine Ban Treaty members is an ongoing challenge. Belarus, Greece, and Turkey failed to meet their four-year stockpile destruction deadline on 1 March 2008, although they have since indicated that they are committed to destroying their stockpiled antipersonnel mines as soon as possible. Some states have been unacceptably slow in fulfilling their mine clearance obligations, potentially putting thousands of civilian lives at risk. Fifteen States Parties, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mozambique, Nicaragua, the UK and Yemen, had to ask last year for an extension of their ten-year deadline for clearance of mine-affected areas. Programs to address the lifelong needs of mine survivors – estimated at almost half a million people worldwide - are still grossly inadequate in the vast majority of affected countries.

Thirty-nine countries – two of which originally signed the treaty but have not ratified it – have not yet formally joined the treaty and thus remain at odds with the widespread international rejection of the weapon.

“Over the past decade we have seen elements of the new diplomacy that created the Mine Ban Treaty applied to tackle other issues, particularly cluster munitions,” said Brigot. “We strongly support the new Convention on Cluster Munitions. However, as with the Mine Ban Treaty, the real value of this agreement will be the difference it makes in the lives of people affected on a daily basis by these weapons, and how it will avoid new victims.”

The ICBL – a worldwide network of some 1,000 civil society organizations, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 - is marking the 10th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty's entry into force with events and activities in more than 50 countries (see list). This includes tree-planting in formerly mine-affected areas in Georgia, a creative campaign to mark dog waste in Spain with “danger: mines” warning signs, a march in the streets of the mine-affected Casamance region of Senegal, an art installations on the border between Greece and Turkey, the DVD launch of the landmines documentary film *Disarm*, and dozens of media events and roundtables with decision-makers.

In Afghanistan we as a representative of civil society organizations in Afghanistan are ready to support this process and to work cooperatively with you and other relevant ministries in order to ensure that we all – States Parties, survivors and disability stakeholders – are satisfied by our achievements by the 2nd Review Conference. Afghanistan should focus in 2009 on the following priorities for those government ministries working on victim assistance in partnership with all mine action and disability stakeholders to:

- Create an up-to-date database on all disability services available in Afghanistan,

- Promote greater understanding of the socio-economic conditions of people with disabilities , including mine survivors,
- Create a directory of all emergency and continuing medical care services in mine/ERW-impacted rural areas,
- Improve physical accessibility in provinces/areas with disability, especially in public areas,
- Improve psychological support programs and social reintegration services for all mine/ERW affected areas in Afghanistan,
- Create a directory of all economic reintegration services in Afghanistan including microfinance provider, vocational training and employment centers,
- Appoint a focal point person within each relevant ministries (MoLSAMD, MOPH and MFA),
- Develop a new or extend the current victim assistance objectives and develop a clear plan of action for the post 2009 period to ensure that Afghanistan can present these objectives and plans at the 2nd Review Conference in November 2009,
- Ensure the full participation of survivors and relevant civil society actors in all VA programs including developing, implementing, and monitoring victim assistance objectives and plans,

Interviews: Sulaiman Aminy
 Phone call: +93 799 31 62 53
 Email: afghan.iso@gmail.com

Geneva, Switzerland
 Phone call: +41 76 267 84 90
 ICBL Website: www.icbl.org / Email: firoz@icbl.org

Background & Figures

Adopted in 1997, the Treaty entered into force on 1 March 1999 - more quickly than any other treaty of its kind. This was the result of a unique partnership of visionary governments and civil society working together to save human lives and limbs. Landmines still affect **70** states, and **6** territories.

80% of the world's states (**156** countries) have adhered to the Mine Ban Treaty. Thirty-nine states remain outside the treaty, including major powers like China, Russia and the USA.

26 countries and the European Commission donated US\$**430** million for mine action in 2007. This is a US\$**45** million decrease in global mine action funding compared to 2006.

Mine Ban Treaty obligations include:

- A prohibition on the use, production, stockpiling or trade in antipersonnel mines, as well as the assistance to or encouraging of anyone involved in these activities;
- A requirement to destroy all stockpiled antipersonnel mines within four years of joining the treaty;
- A requirement to remove and destroy all antipersonnel mines from all mined areas under the state's jurisdiction or control within 10 years of joining the treaty;
- The provision of assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims and for mine awareness programs.

Campaigning and media events to celebrate 1 March will take place in: Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mongolia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, UK, USA, Uruguay, Western Sahara, Yemen, Zambia.

International Campaign to Ban Landmines: www.icbl.org

Landmine Monitor: www.icbl.org/lm

ALSO website: www.Afghanlandminesurvivors.org

Add: St # 12, H # 11, Between MTN Antenna and Assadullah Ghaleb Mosque Lane, Qala-e-Fathullah, Kabul Afghanistan.

Phone call: 0093 (0) 799 31 62 53 / 799 35 36 69

Website: www.afghanlandminesurvivors.org / Email: afghan.iso@gmail.com