

**LANDMINE INFORMATION DAY –
“The European Parliament for a Mine-Free World”
16 June 2005**

OPENING REMARKS

**By
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**To the JOINT HEARING of the EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
Committee on Development
Committee on International Trade
Subcommittee on Security and Defence of the
Committee on Foreign Affairs**

Madame Chairwoman – Luisa Morgantini – thank you for this opportunity to make some remarks at the opening of these hearings which you have convened to provide information and discussion on the continuing struggle to eliminate landmines. Today’s hearings will address the Mine Ban Treaty, mine action and survivor assistance, along with related issues, for members of this Parliament and others. Also, thank you to the three committees that are sponsoring this “Landmine Information Day.”

I share the observation that Luisa just made that many of us working for a mine free world are passionate people – and I share her observation that our passion is not only the passion of our hearts, but also a passion of the intellect. Our work for a world free of antipersonnel landmines is based not only on a desire for a more humane world and humanitarian principles, but also on clear-sighted, evidence-based global advocacy. Our work is based on international law. The landmine ban movement has resulted in the Mine Ban Treaty, which successfully melds disarmament and humanitarian law.

That treaty is one of the few successful arms control treaties functioning today and each and every one of us – whether we be NGOs, parliamentarians, or diplomats – who has worked on this issue should feel justified pride for our joint successes. In recognizing the International Campaign to Ban Landmines with the Nobel Peace Prize for 1997, I believe that the Nobel Committee recognized the work of all of the actors of the ban movement -- each and every one of us involved in this effort which for the first time in history banned a conventional weapon that had been used by every fighting force in the world for over 100 years.

In citing the work of the landmine campaign, the Nobel Committee noted that we had taken the “utopian dream” of a world free of landmines and turned it into virtual reality through the Mine Ban Treaty. I think those are lovely words that describe part of our reality. I only take issue with the word “utopian.” I do not accept that working for a different world, a world which values peace based on human security and social justice is a “utopian dream” at all. Building such a world is hard work. It is hard work carried out each and every day in multiple ways around the world to try not only to demilitarize our world, but also to demilitarize our worldview. It is hard work to get people to understand that real global security will come through human security for us all and not through more weapons and more sophisticated

weapons for the few countries that can afford them to protect themselves and their needs against the needs of the many.

In fact, it was the successes of the landmine ban movement that helped give birth to the “Human Security Network,” which contends that real security will come from meeting the basic needs of the majority of the planet and not through the barrel of a gun. It is some of the countries of the “Old Europe” – that Luisa just mentioned -- that have been active in that network and its work to redefine security.

I saw a provocative op-ed in response to the “No” vote on the European constitution in France the other day, which played off that vote to contend that Europe had no “ambition to power” because it did not want to unite and militarize so it could be a “key player” in the world today. I found this a curious point because at the same time European integration and enlargement of the EU is pushed and promoted as a way to avoid future wars through increased interconnectedness and common interests and development. Can one have it both ways? Perhaps it is not a “lack of ambition to power” but a different worldview offered by some in Europe (and in other parts of the world). Perhaps it is a view of the world that sees conflict prevention and conflict resolution and human security as more appropriate ways to approach resolving problems facing us all in our increasingly globalized world. After two world wars fought on European soil, is calling for re-militarization really the appropriate path? Or should we all continue the hard work of promoting peace through human security. I believe that the successes of the landmine ban movement have contributed to an alternative worldview which considers a human security framework for global security.

The European Parliament and European states have been and continue to be leaders in this hard work. European nations have been leaders both individually and collectively through the European Parliament and other European institutions in our common goal of the elimination of antipersonnel landmines. It is, of course, always dangerous to cite individual examples, because it is impossible not to forget some but I will risk naming a couple of steps taken by European nations as examples of the leadership that helped provide building blocks toward collective action on landmines. France, for example, was among the first nations to declare a moratorium on the export of landmines and other European nations quickly followed suit. And how could one not cite Belgium -- the first country in the world to unilaterally ban antipersonnel landmines with legislation passed in March of 1995. Other European nations such as Norway and Austria, among others, have been key to the birth of the Mine Ban Treaty itself and to the continued success of the ban movement. The European Parliament and other European institutions have also been critical to our joint work to eliminate landmines and in providing resources for mine action and survivor assistance.

In fact, almost one half of the approximately US\$2 billion provided for mine action and survivor assistance has come from the EU and individual member states. In the period between 1997 and 2003, that support totalled some Euro 842 million, and that commitment continues now through the “European Roadmap toward a Zero Victim Target,” the EC mine action strategy for 2005-2007. Part of that strategy envisions an increase in funding to Euro 140 million over the Euro 125.745 provided for 2002-2004. Obviously it would be impossible to meet our goals of a world free of landmines and in which no one falls victim to those insidious weapons without that continued financial commitment. We commend you all for that support – and, in fact, for increasing your support. And we call upon you all for continued political leadership in our fight to eliminate landmines.

We need help to universalize the Mine Ban Treaty and to insure that there is full implementation of and compliance with the Treaty. MEPs could help to bring on board nations that remain outside the Treaty where they have contacts with such states. MEPs could also, for example, help deal with issues related to national implementing legislation required by the Treaty through contacts with other parliamentarians around the world in states parties to the treaty that have not yet enacted such legislation. You could also support work with non-state armed actors.

We recognize that sometimes such work can be very delicate, but we also realize that there must be efforts to reach out to such groups to educate them about the ban and work with them to give up landmines. After all, such groups are now the primary users of landmines. Only two states have consistently used landmines since the Mine Ban Treaty entered into force – Russia and Burma. But many non-state armed actors continue to use antipersonnel landmines. We can commend work done by the Geneva Call and by the non-state actors working group of the ICBL to universalize the norm of a mine ban by engaging with non-state actors. We also can commend the support of the government of Switzerland for such engagement. Others of you could also help with this important work where appropriate.

The European Parliament and individual MEPs can also look at the 70 concrete steps outlined in the Action Plan that was developed through the Nairobi Summit for a Mine Free World – the first review conference of the Mine Ban Treaty held at the end of 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya. That Action Plan – which will be discussed shortly by Austrian Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, President of the Nairobi Summit – outlines very concrete actions to be taken over the next five year period to help reach our goal of a world free of antipersonnel landmines.

I won't go over those points now, as Ambassador Petritsch will be addressing them shortly. But I would like to echo words that he said this Monday morning at the opening of this week's intersessional Standing Committee Meetings on the Mine Ban Treaty in Geneva. Ambassador Petritsch noted that we must not only speak about action, but we must continue to take action. We must all work diligently to fulfil the promise of the Nairobi Action Plan, because if we do, we will go far toward ending the suffering caused by antipersonnel landmines.

Ending that suffering once and for all means a MINE FREE WORLD. And, as I just did in Geneva, I would like to underscore again here in these hearings of the European Parliament that the call for a MINE FREE WORLD is NOT just a catchy slogan. The call for a MINE FREE WORLD is a call for a world in which all mined areas are cleared. As has been very eloquently stated by the Croatian delegation to the Geneva meetings, the only mine safe world is a mine free world. Mine action is not just taking mines out of the ground for humanitarian reasons – it is a treaty compliance issue. Meeting the needs of landmine survivors is not just a humanitarian gesture – it is a treaty compliance issue.

Certainly those of us who make up the International Campaign to Ban Landmines reaffirm our commitment to not only universalizing the mine ban norm, but also to working for and monitoring full implementation of and compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in the European Parliament and the EU to reach those goals. Through a universalized norm and a Treaty fully implemented and complied with, we will attain our goal of a MINE FREE WORLD. We will attain our goal of a world where the needs of tens of thousands of landmine survivors around the world are met, and we

will live in a world in which no one ever needs to worry again about the daily terror of losing a life or a limb to an antipersonnel landmine.

Thank you all for holding these hearings, but more importantly thank you for all the work that you have done and will continue to do as MEPs to reach our common goal of a MINE FREE WORLD with ZERO NEW LANDMINE VICTIMS.

THANK YOU.