

Final Statement General Meeting of the ICBL

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From 20-22 February, the General Meeting of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines met in Frankfurt, Germany. The General Meeting consisted of 70 participants from 40 countries. The main results of the meeting are as follows:

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines is a united coalition committed to the goal of the total elimination of antipersonnel landmines. The ICBL opened the conference with a demonstration at the Rhein Main Air Base to demand that the United States remove its antipersonnel landmines that are stockpiled in Germany, other NATO states and Japan.

The ICBL agreed upon its priorities for 1998 in its three main areas of work. With regard to a ban, a top priority is the achievement in 1998 of the forty ratifications of the Ottawa Treaty necessary for it to become binding international law. It will work to universalize the treaty, with, among other initiatives, a regional conference in Hungary in March and a conference in Russia in May. It will explore a role for its members in monitoring the treaty.

The ICBL agreed that a priority for 1998 is to strengthen the advocacy work of the other two key pillars of the campaign--victim assistance and humanitarian mine clearance. In order to provide for comprehensive programs of assistance to mine survivors, the newly formed working group called for a commitment of three billion dollars over ten years. The six key points elaborated by the new demining working group are designed as guidelines for the ICBL in briefing governments and the public as to the priorities of the campaign with regard to humanitarian mine clearance.

The ICBL discussed all aspects of its current structure and reached a number of decisions. The ten existing members of the steering committee, now renamed the coordination committee, were reconfirmed, and six new members were asked to join: Association to Aid Refugees, Japan; Colombian Campaign Against Landmines; Inter-African Union of Human Rights; Landmine Survivors Network; Lutheran World Federation; and, Norwegian People's Aid. Working groups on each of the three main areas of work were established (ban, humanitarian demining, victim assistance) as well as a fourth working group on Legal and Moral Responsibility, in order to demonstrate the importance of this area of work in the campaign. The working group on nonstate actors will continue to develop its plan to involve these nonstate groups in the ban.

Jody Williams, co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize with the ICBL, relinquished her role as the coordinator. Stating that it values and honors the important position that Jody Williams holds in the eyes of the world as a symbol of our work to overcome landmines, the ICBL asked her to accept a new position as ICBL International Ambassador and to participate in the Coordinating Committee. She accepted. Rae McGrath, who delivered the Nobel Lecture for the ICBL, and Tun Channereth, who accepted the Peace Prize for the ICBL, also accepted roles as International Ambassadors.

It was decided to form a new coordinating team to succeed Jody Williams. Liz Bernstein, based in Mozambique, agreed to become the first member of the team. Handicap International will provide financial and human resources to assist the coordinating team.

The General Meeting agreed that to best utilize the Nobel Peace Prize funds it would establish an account in trust for the ICBL. The intention of the Campaign is to draw on the interest of the account to advance the campaigning goals of a ban and increased resources for humanitarian demining and victim assistance. We will use the trust to attract additional support for the ICBL to ensure its continued work until it has achieved the goal of the total elimination of antipersonnel landmines. The Campaign will launch an appeal to donors to build on the Nobel funds.