

September 2008

ICBL NEWS

The Urgency to Protect Civilian Lives

Only 10 weeks after the world greeted the adoption, in Dublin, of a new treaty to ban cluster munitions for their indiscriminate effects, came the deeply disturbing news that Russia had used the weapons in Georgia. This was brutal evidence of the need to keep high levels of mobilization to ensure this treaty enters into force as soon as possible and establishes a firm norm against any use of these weapons.

Just as national Campaigns to Ban Landmines and members of the Cluster Munition Coalition were commemorating the second anniversary of the cluster bombing of south Lebanon and urging governments to prevent further casualties by embracing the ban on those weapons, Russia dropped cluster bombs in civilian-populated areas in Georgia. This blatant disrespect for civilian lives stood in stark contrast to the recent international efforts to ban cluster bombs. As we go to print, at least 14 civilians have been killed and dozens more injured by the first known use of cluster bombs since the horrific south Lebanon events. Hundreds of explosive bomblets were left behind, and have already started to claim lives and limbs.

The NGO response has been immediate, with condemnation relayed worldwide by major media. With protests outside embassies, letters to Ambassadors and Foreign Affairs ministers and blog posts, civil society from Ireland to Senegal and Netherlands to New Zealand reacted rapidly and spoke with one voice to condemn this unacceptable harm to civilians.



Artwork by Aotearoa New Zealand CMC

Russia is no stranger to the use of indiscriminate weapons. For many years it has been one of the increasingly fewer states still using antipersonnel landmines, despite global condemnation. Having recently ratified Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Russia will be obliged to provide data on use of all explosive ordnance which may have become explosive remnants of war. Last June, commenting on the new Convention on Cluster Munitions, a Russian Foreign Affairs representative stated: "We welcome the intention of a whole array of nations to renounce the use of cluster munitions as a means of warfare... [During recent armed conflicts] the indiscriminate use of individual types of weapon, primarily western-made CMs, led to serious civilian casualties and injuries. This has turned the problem into a key issue facing the international community." These words sound hollow and hypocritical now in the light of Russia's use of cluster munitions in Georgia.

In a letter sent on 18 August, the ICBL urged Russian President Dimitry Medvedev to demonstrate leadership by renouncing all future use of cluster munitions. We asked for immediate action and an early reply. We are still waiting for both and we won't go away.

**** At the time of publishing, Georgia admitted to also having used cluster munitions during the conflict. Campaigners around the world are writing to the Georgian government urging it to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions.**

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The Mine Ban Treaty
1997-2007
A success in progress

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1997-2007
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High Standards for Civilian Protection The Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions

The new Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) was adopted on 30 May 2008. It bans cluster munitions as a class of weapons. The CCM was inspired by the same humanitarian imperatives as the Mine Ban Treaty: preventing future humanitarian harm caused by certain types of indiscriminate conventional weapons and addressing their post-conflict effects through clearance and victim assistance. As the Mine Ban Treaty has done, the CCM will make a real difference, saving thousands of civilian lives, providing relief and assistance to those affected and stigmatizing the weapon as unacceptable. Unquestionably **the CCM has drawn a number of lessons from the experience of implementing the Mine Ban Treaty.** The CCM contains excellent provisions on victim assistance with specific obligations and a broad definition of "victim". These provisions set a new standard for international human rights and humanitarian law and represent a huge improvement over the Mine Ban Treaty (*see article on page 3*). Furthermore, the text of the Convention on Cluster Munitions includes a provision strongly encouraging past user States Parties to provide assistance for clearance. It also includes specific obligations on risk education as well as the need to mobilize resources and develop a national plan for clearance – all of which are key elements drawn from the successful implementation of the MBT. The CCM also acknowledges the need to minimize duplication of efforts, calling on States Parties to build "where appropriate upon existing structures, experiences and methodologies" - a reference to capacity and mechanisms established by the Mine Ban Treaty and other existing instruments (including the International Mine Action Standards). The process to request extensions of clearance

deadlines is also almost exclusively based on lessons learned from the Mine Ban Treaty, as are the expanded transparency reporting requirements. Unfortunately, not all elements of the CCM represent a step forward and some will need to be monitored closely. These include Article 21 – allowing for engagement "in military cooperation and operations with States not party (...) that might engage in activities prohibited to a State Party" – which could represent a potential loophole in an otherwise strong text, and the possibility of unlimited extensions for stockpile destruction. The latter is an obligation which is proving problematic within the Mine Ban Treaty context, with three current cases of non-compliance. We encourage states to make it clear that under Article 21 States Parties must not intentionally or deliberately assist, induce or encourage any activity prohibited under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Civil society's monitoring and advocacy efforts will also focus on the obligation to destroy stockpiles *as soon as possible* since extensions will be granted in exceptional circumstances only. Overall, the CCM is an excellent and practical instrument for solving the cluster munitions problem. Together with the Mine Ban Treaty it will help further protect civilian lives and mitigate the effects of the past use of these weapons. **Given the complementary nature of the two conventions – both in terms of humanitarian principle and practical implementation – joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions should be a natural step for all States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty.** At the same time, hopefully, the CCM process will help build the confidence of those few countries not yet party to the Mine Ban Treaty, but affected by cluster munitions, to join both treaties.

News in Brief

Cluster Munitions: Japan Stands Up For What Is Right—Now it Must Keep Its Promise

On 26 June 2008, the Japanese newspaper "Mainichi" published an opinion piece signed by Jody Williams, co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize with the ICBL, on the position of Japan with regard to cluster bombs. Adopting the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) with other 106 states, Japan reversed the conservative position it had previously held. The article highlighted how civil society's pressure on the government to "do the right thing", played a key role in Japan's U-turn. The Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines worked hard to raise awareness among the public, and the Japanese media also provided a crucial contribution to these efforts. Jody Williams called the government of Japan to sign the CCM in December 2008 and be among the first to ratify it, recalling that wide adherence to the convention is the only way to efficiently stigmatise cluster

2012 Is Not Soon Enough - Pressure on Poland

Continues

To urge quick ratification of the Mine Ban Treaty by Poland, the President of the 8th Meeting of the States Parties Prince Mired Raad Al-Hussein of Jordan paid a visit to Warsaw on 25-27 August. The Polish Red Cross (PRC) in collaboration with the ICBL organized media around the royal visit, resulting in broad national coverage. After discussions at the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Ministries, Polish authorities announced 2012 as a new possible date for ratification. This is a step forward from the previous date of 2015 but still not enough. Encouraged by this step, the PRC and ICBL will continue urging Poland to ratify the MBT by the 2nd Review Conference in 2009. For this purpose the PRC is running an on-line petition that will be handed-over to the Prime Minister.

Victim Assistance from Ottawa to Oslo: Building on the Lessons Learned through the Mine Ban Treaty

The Mine Ban Treaty was the first disarmament treaty to recognize an obligation for States Parties to assist victims of the banned weapon. The victim assistance provisions of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) have now set historic standards for assistance to victims of conflict by building on the lessons learned through years of implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty.

Why is it such a step forward to have this comprehensive text on victim assistance, if actual implementation remains the main challenge?

Through this comprehensive text, States Parties now have specific indications of what activities they are expected to carry out to comply with their obligation to assist the victims; and civil society has a comprehensive legally-binding text to which it can - and will - hold States accountable.

Alongside civil society, a diversified group of states contributed to defining the victim assistance obligations of the CCM: affected states, donors, and others with strong experience on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This demonstrated their commitment to this matter - now, it is up to us campaigners to continue our mobilization and work with states to ensure that this text becomes a reality in the field.

What are the main lessons learned from implementation of victim assistance in the Mine Ban Treaty that are now reflected in the Convention on Cluster Munitions?

The Convention on Cluster Munitions:

- Addresses victim assistance in an operative article (Article 5);
- Links victim assistance to international humanitarian and human rights law;
- Recognizes that victims include those injured or killed and affected families and communities;
- Mentions the main elements of victim assistance: medical care, physical rehabilitation, psychological support, social and economic inclusion, data collection, and laws and policies;
- Lists implementation measures: creation of plans of action with budgets and timeframes; resource mobilization; establishment of focal points;
- Cites human rights principles - non discrimination, participation and inclusion;



CCM campaigners celebrate the adoption of the Convention. At the forefront, victims of mines and cluster munitions from Afghanistan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Serbia, Western Sahara, and Tajikistan (Photo: M. Wareham)

- Recognizes victim assistance as a key element throughout the Convention.

How do the victim assistance obligations of the Convention on Cluster Munitions complement the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities provides the most comprehensive framework to ensure the human rights of all persons with disabilities, including victims of conflict, are fulfilled. Including victim assistance in treaties banning specific weapons (Mine Ban Treaty, Convention on Cluster Munitions) reminds countries that they have an obligation to ensure that people disabled by these weapons enjoy human rights and have the support they may need in different areas to lead fulfilling lives. Therefore, these three texts are complementary and strengthen each other - universalisation of the three instruments remains a key objective for victim assistance.

Some advocacy ideas for campaigners

1. Raise awareness among and alongside persons with disabilities, including victims of mines, cluster munitions and other ERW; civil society organizations working on development, disability and human rights; national authorities and international stakeholders;
2. Discuss with donor countries how sustainable international cooperation is necessary for the effective implementation of victim assistance; and how their efforts under the Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are complementary;
3. Ensure victim assistance is an integral part of your advocacy on the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions;
4. Participate actively in ICBL and Cluster Munitions Coalition victim assistance advocacy planning and implementation discussions and activities.

- Wanda Muñoz, Handicap International

Mine Ban Treaty: How Should States Parties Address Cases of Non-Compliance?

States Parties' record of compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty has been generally very good. This reflects the high level of respect with which it is treated and the cooperative approach surrounding the treaty's implementation. Yet there have been an increasing number of compliance issues over recent years and the need to address them effectively is now urgent.

To date, concerns about non-compliance with the treaty have for the most part been handled successfully albeit in an uncoordinated, unplanned fashion. States Parties have relied heavily on nongovernmental actors and on the willingness of some individual States Parties, and often individual diplomats, to take action.

The ICBL has stated on numerous occasions that this *ad hoc* approach has not been enough to handle all compliance cases and we believe a more systematic approach is required to address ongoing issues and help prevent new ones. With challenges ranging from three serious violations of Article 4 (missed stockpile destruction deadlines) to allegations of mine transfers (see below), some creative solutions must be developed by the Second Review Conference in 2009.

What compliance provisions say

Article 8 of the Mine Ban Treaty contains a multistage system of verification procedures including fact-finding missions to investigate potential violations. While this could be seen as both a comprehensive and reasonable method to clarify contentious issues, instead it seems to be viewed as an accusatory and intrusive approach. Therefore there has so far been quite serious reluctance to operationalize Article 8.

National implementation measures are no panacea

Given the aversion to Article 8, States Parties have stressed that Article 9 should be the primary compliance provision because it rightfully puts on individual states the responsibility to prevent and suppress prohibited acts. This approach, however, is only viable if the state itself is not violating the treaty! In addition, it cannot be counted on to deal effectively with all non-compliance concerns considering only one-third of the States Parties have actually put national implementation measures into place.

Possible solutions

Practical steps must be taken to prepare the implementation of Article 8 should the need arise to invoke it. In addition, informal mechanisms or an informal body should be developed to ensure compliance concerns are addressed in a systematic and coordinated fashion. Creative solutions could involve assigning responsibility for initiating information-gathering or discussions on compliance cases to past and present Presidents of the Meetings of States Parties, or co-chairs of the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention, some variation of the Contact Group model or another innovative approach.

Compliance Concerns for the ICBL

- *It appears that several States Parties have relied on antipersonnel mines laid in the past to serve an ongoing military purpose, such as defending a border or installations. This could violate the prohibition on mine use and the obligation to clear minefields as soon as possible.*
- *Belarus, Greece and Turkey are in violation of Article 4 that requires them to destroy their stockpiled mines within four years. Each had a deadline of 1 March 2008. As of August 2008, Greece had not destroyed a single mine.*
- *Many States Parties, such as Turkey and Algeria, retain unjustifiable numbers of mines without using them for training or research and development as permitted, which is an abuse of Article 3 and could be seen as effectively stockpiling the mines.*
- *Many affected States Parties have not made their best efforts to clear mined areas as soon as possible and no later than 10 years after joining the treaty.*
- *Domestic legislation is still missing in two-thirds of States Parties, despite the obligation to enact national measures to implement the treaty - including penal sanctions for any violation.*
- *The UN arms embargo monitoring group for Somalia has made detailed allegations of transfers of antipersonnel mines from Eritrea and Ethiopia to factions in Somalia, despite strong denials from those States Parties.*

Let's Make History Happen Again: Collect Signatures for the People's Treaty

Mines Action Canada (MAC) and the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) have re-launched the People's Treaty and need your help to get 500,000 signatures before the new Convention banning cluster bombs opens for signature on 3 December 2008 in Oslo, Norway.

The first "People's Treaty" was launched in Ottawa 10 years ago, on 3 December 1997. While inside the conference hall 122 governments signed the historic Mine Ban Treaty, outside ordinary citizens demonstrated their personal commitment by signing the People's Treaty, born out of the tremendous ground-swell of support from citizens around the world who wanted to stop the suffering caused by antipersonnel landmines.

The People's Treaty provided a vehicle for ordinary people to commit themselves to ensuring that the goals of the Mine Ban Treaty are fully realized and that their governments meet their obligations. Since that time, the People's Treaty has received hundreds of thousands of signatures from all over the globe and provided a vehicle to engage the public, generate media attention and put pressure on governments. **It is now time to mobilize that same public support to prevent any further civilian suffering caused by cluster bombs.**

The People's Treaty was re-launched internationally in Ireland on 30 May 2008 – the final day of the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions. We have less than four months to ensure that enough countries will be ready to sign the convention so that it can become binding international law as quickly as possible. Our goal is to handover People's Treaty signatures to governments at the signing ceremony to remind them that the world is watching and that we expect governments to fully commit to solving this problem once and for all.

The **People's Treaty website** has everything you need to educate and engage your supporters, media, community leaders and the general public about the issue, including fact sheets, ready-to-use presentations, slide shows, photo galleries, videos, petition sheets and many other campaign resources. The People's Treaty site is available in four languages – English, French, Arabic and Spanish – and can be found at www.minesactioncanada.org/peoples_treaty. For those with limited access to internet, a multi-lingual CD version of the website can also be requested by contacting Laura Cheeseman at laura@stopclustermunitions.org.

- Nancy Ingram, Mines Action Canada

Tenth Landmine Monitor Report Set for November Release

The 10th *Landmine Monitor* Annual Report, Executive Summary (with CD-ROM) and web page will be released at a press conference in Geneva on Friday 21 November, just days before the Ninth Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty opens. *Landmine Monitor* reports are designed to provide ICBL members with the information they need to hold governments accountable for their actions under the Mine Ban Treaty. This year's Annual Report will cover 119 countries and areas, with information on ban policy, clearance, casualties, risk education, survivor assistance and support for mine action (financial and in kind).

Order: Order *Landmine Monitor* reports online at www.icbl.org/lm/order

Release: A few ideas on how to use and distribute report findings in your country to support your advocacy work:

- Translate findings into your local language
- Organize a meeting with government officials to discuss report findings and convey key advocacy messages
- Release report findings to the national media

Call for researchers: We are seeking researchers to contribute to our 2009 report. The application form can be downloaded at www.icbl.org/lm/updates

Contact: For ideas and suggestions on how to launch the 2008 *Landmine Monitor* report in your country, or for other information contact lm@icbl.org



Interesting fact

Did you know... that the *Landmine Monitor* CD-ROM includes the full Annual Report (all country/ area reports), in addition to reports from previous years, maps, photos, and translations of the Executive Summary in Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish?

- Jackie Hansen, Landmine Monitor

News in Brief

Afghanistan: Concern over Reports of Taliban Mine Use

On 19 June 2008, the ICBL expressed concern about recent media reports of mine use by the Taliban. According to the news reports, Taliban have recently laid mines in Arghandab District of Kandahar Province, but it is not clear if these are antipersonnel mines. The former Taliban-controlled Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) was prohibited by its unrecognized status from signing the Mine Ban Treaty, but indicated its willingness to do so. In 1998 the IEA made a public commitment to a total ban on the production, trade, stockpiling, and use of landmines, and further stated that "*the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan would never make use of any type of landmines*" and that "*those who use landmines in personal, political or any other differences in Afghanistan would be punished in accordance with the Islamic law.*" However, since 2007, as the level of Taliban military activity increased, new antipersonnel mines use has been alleged.

Thailand CBL Member Receives Prestigious Award

Therdchai Jivacate, secretary-general of the Thai Protheses Foundation and a member of the Thailand Campaign to Ban Landmines, has won the 2008 Ramon Magsaysay Award – considered the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Prize - for his efforts in developing locally-made artificial legs for poor disabled people. The foundation – set up in 1991 - has so far made over 21,500 legs for amputees across the country. Thailand has about 30,000 amputees. A significant number of the leg injuries were caused by landmines.

Somalia: Stockpiled Mines Destroyed in Puntland

On 24 July 2008, in Somalia, the Puntland Mine Action Centre (PMAC), with technical support from [Mines Advisory Group](#) (MAG), destroyed 48 stockpiled antipersonnel mines near Garowe. This was the first officially recorded destruction of antipersonnel mine stocks in Puntland.

The Puntland authorities are a signatory to the [Geneva Call](#) Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action, which pledges them to banning the use, production, acquisition and transfer of antipersonnel mines, to destroying their antipersonnel mine stocks, and to facilitating mine action activities.

Lebanon: Cluster Bomb Clearance at Risk

In August, the United Nation's Mine Action Co-ordination Center (UNMACC) in southern Lebanon declared that, unless they receive millions of dollars in missing funding, they will be forced to end their cluster munitions clearance operations half-way through their work. Handicap International (HI), which is also carrying out cluster-bomb clearance in the South since January 2007, is also facing financial uncertainty. In a statement released on the anniversary of the August 2006 Israeli bombings – which left the agricultural lands of South Lebanon littered with cluster munition duds - HI said that "more than 320 people have been killed or injured since the end of the conflict, mostly because of cluster munitions."

Iran-Iraq Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Calls for Clearance of Landmines

On 9 June 2008, the Ministers of Defence of Iran and Iraq signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the field of defence. Among other things, the Memorandum of Understanding calls for the removal of landmines emplaced along the border between the two countries during the 1980 – 1988 conflict.

Iraq joined the Mine Ban Treaty on 15 August 2007, while Iran still remains outside the treaty.

Jordan: Wadi Araba and Aqaba Free of Mines

On 6 August 2008, a handover ceremony was held in Aqaba, Jordan to celebrate the completion of the *Wadi Araba and Aqaba mine clearance project*, one of the country's main demining projects. During the ceremony, Norwegian People's Aid representatives in Jordan handed over the cleared land to the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation (NCDR). The cleared land was subsequently handed over to its owners by H.R.H. Prince Mired Al-Husseini, Chairman of NCDR and President of the 8th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty at another ceremony in Amman. Info: www.ncdr.org.jo

USA: Maine Congressional Delegation Co-Sponsors Cluster Munition Legislation

Following months of creative and persistent effort by campaigners, in July 2008 Maine became the first U.S. state to get its entire congressional delegation on board legislation to curb U.S. cluster bomb export and use. The U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines is mobilizing its membership to increase the number of co-sponsors of the bill, so as to show the next President that the public and congress want him to bring the United States into the global efforts to ban cluster munitions.

Afghanistan: ICBL Urges Release of Kidnapped Deminers, Condemns Harassment

On 22 August 2008, the ICBL condemned the recent kidnapping of 13 members of a demining organization and called for measures to ensure the security of life-saving demining operations and personnel. The men were abducted by unidentified forces on 19 August in Gardez province. While seven of them were subsequently released, the fate of the remaining six remains unknown at the time of publishing.

Unfortunately, attacks on deminers are not infrequent in Afghanistan – one of the most heavily countries in the world and host to the world's largest demining programme. Between 2006 and 2007, at least 13 deminers were deliberately killed, and several more were injured or kidnapped.

Campaign News

Austria: Advertising Campaign on Cluster Bombs Receives Award in Vienna



On 13 June 2008, CMC Austria received the prestigious Media Award 2008 for their high profile and successful advertising campaign "Were this flyer a cluster bomb, you would be dead". The campaign, created on the occasion of the Vienna Conference on cluster munitions in December 2007, received awards in the "Excellent Media Strategy" and as the

"Most creative campaign" in the "Excellent Media Strategy - Budget Under Euro 200,000" category. The directors of CMC Austria, Judith Majlath, and of the Wien Nord Agency, partner in this project, received the award at a well-attended ceremony, which provided an opportunity to give recognition to the cluster munition issue and the to the hard work of CMC Austria. CMC Austria was instrumental in achieving the adoption, in December 2007, of a national law banning all types of cluster munitions and requiring the destruction of stockpiles within three years.

Geneva: Broken Chair Calling on States to Sign the Cluster Munitions Convention

From 2 July to 12 December 2008 a huge banner, placed on the back of the famous Broken Chair in Place des Nations in Geneva, will call on states to sign, on 3 December 2008 in Oslo, the convention banning cluster munitions. Back in 1997, the Broken Chair was used to urge countries to sign the Mine Ban Treaty. This initiative was promoted by Handicap International – lead by its Swiss section –

to support the campaign calling for the signature and ratification of the new Convention on Cluster Munitions, with a view to turning its text into reality as soon as possible. The Convention on Cluster Munitions was adopted by 107 states in Dublin, Ireland, on 30 May 2008.



Photo: HI

Azerbaijan: Creating Economic Opportunities for Landmine Survivors

The Azerbaijan Campaign to Ban Landmines (AzCBL) is beginning the second phase of a project providing support for the economic reintegration of mine survivors in the Ter-ter and Fizuli regions. The project aims to provide the tools needed to empower survivors to become fully-functioning, self-sufficient members of society, starting their own small businesses. The AzCBL will deliver interest-free micro-credit loans to four beneficiaries, who will be asked to repay only half of the loan after one year. Three of the beneficiaries are engaged in cattle breeding and one in small trade. This is the continuation of a project, the first of such type in the former Soviet Union, launched in April 2006, when the AzCBL began implementation of a 15-month project in Tovuz, Ter-ter and Fizuli districts and Ganja city, with financial support from the Swiss Foundation for Landmines Victims Aid.

Italy: Roman Holiday with a Difference for American Law Students

On 24 July 2008, a group of 47 American students from the University of St. Thomas Law School, accompanied by ICBL member Professor Virgil Wiebe, visited the Italian Campaign to Ban Landmines (ItCBL) in Rome. The students were taking part in a summer course at John Cabot University in Rome to study the



Photo: ItCBL

causes and laws of war, and issues related to pacifism and conscientious objection. The visit to ItCBL was the last element of their programme. The organization's team specialising in educational programmes gave a presentation on the ItCBL's work with particular focus on schools and youth activities and described their experience as volunteers at the 8MSP in Jordan. The ItCBL coordinator for peace and development education programmes, Tibisay Ambrosini, gave a presentation on the Italian legislation on landmines and legislative initiatives on cluster bombs. The presentation was followed by a very lively and fruitful exchange of ideas and opinions and light refreshments. Visiting students were given a CD-rom containing information on the topics covered in the presentation.

ICBL Admitted to Combined Federal Campaign

On 27 June, the ICBL was admitted to the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) as a member of Peace and Reconciliation Charities, the world's largest workplace fundraising drive, sponsored by the US government. Each fall, beginning in September, US Federal employees - civilian, military and postal - are invited to support eligible national and local charities. Employees choose the groups they wish to support from a list of charities that have submitted applications and been deemed qualified by the CFC.

The list is available at www.peaceandreconciliation.org/members.htm

Campaign News

Iraqi Alliance Advocacy Activities



Iraqi campaigners meet the Minister of Environment. Photo: Al-Khafaji

On 16 July 2008 the Iraqi Alliance of Disability organizations had a meeting in Baghdad with the Iraqi Minister of Environment Dr Narmin Othman. The minister stated her intention to cooperate with the programs for the socio-economic reintegration of landmines and cluster munitions victims developed by the Alliance. She also assured that Iraq will join the Convention on Cluster Munitions and will hopefully attend the signing ceremony in Oslo.

Furthermore, on the occasion of an international conference on disability and war organized by the United Nations in Beirut (4 July), the Iraqi Alliance had the opportunity to speak with the President of Lebanon, Mr Mechil Suliman, about the effects of landmines and cluster munitions in the two countries. Both parties agreed on the necessity to cooperate to stop these weapons and, as a first step, the Iraqi alliance asked the Lebanese President to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Nepal: NCBL Calls for Action at National and Regional Level

On 18 July 2008 the Nepal Campaign to Ban Landmines (NCBL) submitted a letter to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Secretariat in Kathmandu requesting its member states to make the SAARC region landmine-free. The letter highlighted threats caused by landmines and explosives in the region and urged SAARC members to join the Mine Ban Treaty and sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo. The request came in the run-up to the 15th SAARC Summit in Sri Lanka.



Photo: NCBL

Furthermore, on 19 July the NCBL-affiliated organization "National Network of Mine Victims" organized an appeal to Constituent Assembly members to push them to play an important role in humanitarian issues and in the protection of civilians. Assembly members committed to take a stand for the rights and welfare of victims. The day was chosen symbolically as it was the day in which the first president of the

Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal was elected.

On 10 August, the NCBL organized a national seminar on the mine issue and Mine Ban Treaty, inaugurated by the Minister for Peace and Reconstruction and Coordinator of the National Mine Action Steering Committee, Ram Chandra Paudel. During the Seminar, representatives of NCBL and of the main political parties, UNMAS, the Canadian embassy to Nepal and the National Human Rights Commission delivered speeches. The seminar ended with the approval and signature of a Declaration on a Mine-free Nepal, prepared by the NCBL, by around 100 participants, which included Constituent Assembly members and representatives of various political parties, diplomatic missions, human rights organizations, the ICRC, Nepal Red Cross, Nepal Army and Police, journalists and landmine victims. Minister Ram Chandra Paudel was also among the signatories.

USA: Fundraising Event for Water Wells in Cambodia



Photo: WVCBL

On 10 May 2008 a "Starfish" Day was organized by the West Virginia Campaign to Ban Landmines (WVCBL) together with "Landmines Blow!", a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the global landmine crisis. St. Francis Proud Students Against Land Mines (PSALM) began the "Starfish Project" at school last year. The name comes from the Starfish Story, about a young child who throws starfish stranded on the beach back into the ocean, symbolizing the ability of people to make a difference in the lives of others.

The "Starfish" Day is the second Cambodian Water Well Project sponsored by WVCBL and PSALM students. The goal was to raise funds for water wells in Cambodia, where getting water means not only having to walk most of the day just to bring home a couple of buckets full of often contaminated water, but also risking your life navigating a countryside blanketed with landmines and UXO.

The Ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 24 to 28 November 2008. Information on meeting registration, logistics, programme etc. will soon be available on www.icbl.org