

Central America Becomes World's First Landmine-Free Region

As Nicaragua celebrated completion of its mine clearance activities on 18 June 2010, Central America became the world's first landmine-free region. North and Central America, from the Arctic Circle to the Colombian border, are now free from the threat of landmines. This success demonstrates that with sustained efforts a mine-free world is possible.

"Communities in the region that suffered from conflict in recent history are now free from the threat of mines and can move on with rebuilding their lives," said Yassir Chavarría Gutiérrez of the Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas, the ICBL member in Nicaragua. "As Central America emerged from conflict, over a decade of mine clearance served as a regional confidence-building measure and embodied the Mine Ban Treaty's spirit of openness, transparency, and cooperation."

Central American governments, the Organization of American States (OAS), and

international donors showed significant political will and demonstrated the importance of international cooperation and assistance in mine action.

Of Central America's seven countries, five used to be mine-affected: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica (the other two being Belize and Panama). All have met their mine clearance obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty, which requires that all known mined areas be cleared within ten years. Nonetheless, residual mine clearance capacity will still be needed in the region, including in Nicaragua, as there are still likely mines in weapons caches or



Mine survivor Jose Luis Marquez, in El Salvador. El Salvador completed clearance of its mined areas in 1994, but landmine survivors still require lifelong assistance. Photo: Giovanni Diffidenti

emplaced in unknown areas.

"The job is not done now that all the mines have been cleared. Landmine survivors, their families, and communities require lifelong assistance. Government funding that previously supported clearance should now be channeled to victim assistance initiatives," said Jesús Martínez, Director of the Fundación Red de Sobrevivientes, the ICBL member in El Salvador, and a mine survivor himself.

Since 1996 the OAS has adopted regular resolutions in support

of a mine-free Western Hemisphere. Landmines in the Caribbean (Cuba) and in South America (Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, and the Falkland Islands/Malvinas) still need to be cleared. Only Cuba and the United States have not joined the Mine Ban Treaty. President Obama has ordered a review of US landmine policy. The ICBL calls on Cuba and the US to join the Mine Ban Treaty as soon as possible to ensure the Western Hemisphere will forever be free of these inhumane weapons. ■

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U.S. Landmine Policy Review Process Moving Forward

During the Cartagena Summit, the U.S. announced that it would initiate a formal and comprehensive review of its landmine policy. We later learned that this review process would be led by the National Security Council and would involve both the Departments of State and Defense. In response, the USCBL and ICBL launched a number of actions to ensure that the process would be inclusive, timely, and aimed at ultimate accession to the Mine Ban Treaty.

On 1 March 2010, on the occasion of the 11th anniversary of the entry into force of the Mine Ban Treaty, ICBL campaigners requested visits from over 60 U.S. embassies. Throughout March and April, embassy meetings with government officials were conducted in 37 embassies. Campaigners lobbied for speedy U.S. accession to the treaty, generating multiple reports sent by U.S. embassy staff back to the State Department.

On 22 March, the USCBL delivered a letter to President Obama signed by 65 U.S.-based NGOs. The letter first congratulated the administration on initiating the landmine policy review that this group of leaders requested in a letter delivered in February 2009. It also urged that the U.S. policy review process be timely,

inclusive and aimed at accession to the treaty. It also called on the President to submit the treaty to the Senate for its advice and consent before the end of 2010.

Then, on 18 May, a letter signed by 68 Senators also asking the administration to join the treaty was delivered to President Obama. The signers included 10 Republicans and two Independents, constituting more than the two-thirds of the Senate needed to ratify a treaty. Sen. Patrick Leahy (VT-D) and Sen. George Voinovich (OH-R) circulated the Senate letter, and a similar letter in support of the Senate initiative, circulated by Rep. James McGovern (MA-D) and Rep. Darrell Issa (CA-R) in the House of Representatives, was also delivered to the President.



Campaigners meeting with U.S. embassies representatives. Photos: Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines, Harmony of the World/ Tajikistan Campaign to Ban Landmines, Handicap International (Mozambique)

In May, the State Department also initiated consultations with NGOs as a part of the review process. Officials from the State and Defense Departments conducted around ten meetings and conference calls with various mine action and advocacy organizations, including many ICBL and USCBL coalition members. During these meetings, NGO & UN representatives were offered an opportunity to give their opinion on why the U.S. should join the treaty. After these statements, the consultations consisted of a dialogue period during which representatives and relevant officials asked and answered questions.

On 10 June, a group of landmine survivors gathered in Chile for the Santiago Conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions also participated in a consultative conference call with U.S. officials involved in the review process..

The ICBL calls on government officials of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty to reach out to their counterparts in the U.S. to encourage accession. Members of the general public are invited to sign a petition supporting U.S. accession at www.avaaz.org ■

Zach Hudson, United States Campaign to Ban Landmines

Monitor Launches Country Profiles Webpage

On 22 June 2010, Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor will launch its Country Profiles website at www.the-monitor.org

The site will include dedicated webpages for every country in the world with information about landmines and cluster munitions.

Country Profiles will include summaries of developments in each country related to mine ban policy, cluster munition ban policy, mine action, casualties and victim assistance, and support for mine action. Country Profiles will focus on calendar year 2009, with key developments for 2010 added throughout



the year. Profiles will include country maps and links to key resources. Readers can comment on reports online and can sign up to receive email updates every time reports for specific countries are updated. Country Profiles replace the country reports in the annual Landmine Monitor

Report, which was published from 1999–2009. With their web-based format, Country Profiles will be easy to update throughout the year, providing readers with the most up to date information to support their work.

Approximately 80 Country Profiles will

be online starting 22 June. All Country Profiles will be online by the end of August. Sign up online to receive an email notification when the Country Profiles you are most interested in are added to the website. Please send any comments or questions about Country Profiles to monitor@icbl.org. ■

IMPLEMENTATION

Concerns on Mine Ban Treaty Implementation

Over 100 ICBL delegates including mine survivors, civil society advocates, mine action practitioners and researchers will participate in the intersessional Standing Committee (ISC) meetings taking place in Geneva from 21-25 June 2010. The ICBL calls on government delegates to use these informal meetings to address key concerns related to Mine Ban Treaty implementation. The ISC meetings should be an opportunity to ask questions and get additional information on plans and concrete actions taken to comply with several Mine Ban Treaty obligations and commitments made in the Cartagena Action Plan.

Ban on Use

"All States Parties will: CAP Action #5: Condemn and continue to discourage in every possible way any production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines by any actor."

The ICBL is gravely concerned by allegations of mine use by members of the Turkish Army (see page 6). We call on Turkey conduct a thorough independent investigation to identify and prosecute those responsible. We call on Turkey and all States Parties to ensure accountability and transparency in addressing this most serious issue.

Stockpile Destruction

"All States Parties yet to complete their obligations under Article 4 will: CAP Action #10: Take all necessary steps to comply with Article 4 as soon as possible..."

All States Parties with remaining stockpile destruction obligations (Belarus, Greece, Turkey and Ukraine) have missed their deadline and are now in violation of the treaty. The ICBL calls on those states to fix an early target end date for destruction and to report monthly on progress made towards that goal.

Mine Clearance

"States Parties that have reported mined areas under their jurisdiction or control but due to exceptional circumstances need to request an extension to their 10-year deadline, will: Action #21: Inform the States Parties of these exceptional circumstances in due time, develop the extension request in line with the recommendations made by the 7MSP..."

Colombia, Denmark and Mauritania have requested mine clearance deadline extensions so far in 2010 and another three to five other requests might be

submitted later this year. The ICBL calls on those states to prepare requests that show clearly the amount of mine-contaminated areas and present an ambitious and realistic request to clear them as soon as possible. ■

Victim Assistance in Action

At the Cartagena Summit, in the Survivors' Call to Action, survivors and other persons with disabilities committed to continue sharing their knowledge and participating in the planning, implementation and monitoring of victim assistance efforts under the Mine Ban Treaty.



Ken Rutherford delivers the Survivors' Call to Action at the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World. Photo: Giovanni Diffidenti

States reaffirmed the fundamental goals of "promoting and protecting the human rights of mine survivors, and addressing the needs of mine victims, including survivors, their affected families and communities". In the Cartagena Action Plan (CAP), they committed to providing assistance "in accordance with applicable international humanitarian and human rights law, with the aim of ensuring [the victims'] full and effective participation and inclusion in the social, cultural, economic and political life of their communities."

On the part of the ICBL's victim assistance focal points (VAFPs), work to ensure implementation of the CAP started at

the summit itself and has been ongoing since then. The VAFPs are campaign members, survivors, practitioners and representatives of people with disabilities' organizations, who

volunteered to take up a role at the national level, within the ICBL, to advocate for victim assistance in countries with significant numbers of survivors. The VAFP network has currently 37 members in

30 countries, including 25 States Parties.

ICBL Focal Points Set Out 2010 Goals

Early in 2010, VAFPs in over 15 countries developed advocacy plans with measurable objectives, aiming at concrete changes in the lives of victims. Objectives and activities include, for example, the integration of peer support into the Ministry of Public Health's package of services in Afghanistan, through technical support and training provided by the Afghan Landmine Survivors Organization, or the empowerment and inclusion of women survivors into community life through awareness-raising sessions on human rights organized by the Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions.



VAFP Bekele Gonfa and Denise Coghlan from the Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions discuss with representatives of Ethiopia at the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World



VAFPs Shireen Hanna Dabbas, Youcef Rafai and Saleh Al-Dhahyani exchange views on advocacy priorities at the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World. Photo: Giovanni Diffidenti

Several VAFPs already reached some of their goals in the first half of the year, as Ethiopia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Senegal adopted a national law on the rights of persons with disabilities, Croatia established a coordination committee, and D.R. Congo set up a committee jointly with civil society, tasked with developing a national action plan.

Since getting back home from the Cartagena Summit, VAFPs also helped raising awareness on the CAP with their local partners to foster broad adherence to and understanding of its content.

Sharing Knowledge to Promote Victim Assistance

Civil society members including mine survivors took active part in a meeting conveyed in Vienna on 8 April 2010, on the initiative of Austria, to exchange views on CAP implementation. Representatives from 35 states from all regions of the world gathered

with NGO experts and mine survivors to discuss how to manage synergies and coordination, the relationship between donor states and recipient states as well as the linkages between victim assistance and the broader public health and social services.

As the Middle East is a region that is heavily affected by mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war and as such counts many related casualties, ICBL member Handicap International organized two workshops in Amman on 25 and 26 May, for civil society and service providers, including survivors and disability advocates, as well as for government representatives, donors and embassy staff. Participants reviewed the components of victim assistance and specific objectives that could guide efforts in Jordan, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and the Palestinian Territories. The presentations, combined with the interactive format, brought increased clarity on the need for national

action plans and on items to be taken forward once back on home ground.

On the margins of the Santiago International Conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions, on 13 June, VAFPs and other campaigners from the ICBL and Cluster Munition Coalition spent a day building their capacity and exchanging good practices on synergies between the Mine Ban Treaty, Convention on

Cluster Munitions and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in terms of monitoring and reporting, as well as on inclusive development, opportunities for raising awareness and working with the media in 2010, fundraising tips and an overview of civil society input on the Vientiane Action Plan to be adopted at the first meeting of the States Parties to the CCM in November.

VAFPs will participate in the intersessional Standing Committees meetings in Geneva from 21-25 June. The ICBL and VAFPs look forward to hearing from states about progress made in translating the CAP into real change in the lives of survivors and affected communities. ■

ICBL Ambassadors Tun Channareth and Song Kosal invited high-level government representatives to ensure commitments made in Cartagena would turn into real progress on the ground. Photo: Giovanni Diffidenti



Senegal Adopts Disability Law

Senegal adopted a national law on the rights of persons with disabilities in May 2010. Drafted with input from disability organizations, the law aims at guaranteeing access to services including healthcare, education and employment. "We salute the spirit of partnership with civil society that helped bringing about this new text. Implementation will now be crucial to ensure this

law on paper truly answers the needs of persons with disabilities, including mine survivors," said Mamady Gassama, of the Senegalese Mine Victims Association. The association calls on Senegal to also confirm its commitment at the international level by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the earliest opportunity. ■

Kashmiri Court Awards Compensation for Mine Injuries

On 14 May 2010, the Sessions Court in Kupwara District, Jammu and Kashmir, directed the government of India to pay Rs 1.2 million (US\$26,199) to Gulzar Mir, a double amputee who lost his legs to an Indian Army laid antipersonnel mine in 2002 while grazing livestock near his home village. According to media reports, the judge presiding over this case ruled that the Indian Army failed to provide evidence that the state had transferred control of the forest where Gulzar Mir grazed his animals to the Army, or that there was a just and fair basis for placing

the antipersonnel mines in this area. The judge stated that India is responsible for compensating victims, and that Gulzar Mir had a right to claim damages.

India is not party to the Mine Ban Treaty and continues to view antipersonnel mines as legitimate weapons necessary for use on its borders. Between 1999 and 2008, Landmine Monitor identified 2,931 casualties in India from mines, explosive remnants of war or victim-activated improvised explosive devices. ■

Turkey: Grave Concerns Over Allegations of Mine Use

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is gravely concerned by reports of antipersonnel landmine use by members of the Turkish Army. On 15 April 2010, the Turkish newspaper Taraf published documents reportedly belonging to the 23rd Gendarmerie Command that appear to indicate that members of the Turkish armed forces planted M2A4 antipersonnel mines in Turkey's southeastern province of Sirnak on 9 April 2009. Additional media reports seem to indicate the

mine-laying was the personal initiative of an individual commander. The ICBL urges Turkey to fully investigate the incident and to impose penal sanctions as appropriate. ■

Philippines: New Clearance Agreement

On 5 May 2010, the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), in partnership with the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines (PCBL) and the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, signed the "Implementing Guidelines on the Clearing of Landmines and Unexploded Ordnances

in Conflict-Affected Areas". According to PCBL, the implementation of this landmark agreement will not only benefit the people in affected communities in Mindanao, southern Philippines but will definitely boost the confidence of both parties in their pursuit of a final peace agreement. ■

CAMPAIGN NEWS

Senegal: Engaging with Casamance Communities

Geneva Call and four local non-governmental organizations including ICBL member Senegalese Mine Victims Association facilitated mine ban advocacy community meetings in Casamance in April and May 2010, in partnership with the National Commission for Mine Action (CNAMS). Coordinated by ICBL-Senegal with financial support from Geneva Call, the meetings aimed at raising local people's awareness of the dangers posed by landmines, and of the Mine Ban Treaty, within seven of the most affected communities of Casamance in Southern Senegal.

Educational materials were also distributed to members of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance based in the region. Meeting participants consistently expressed the wish for urgent demining efforts to be undertaken. An international tender to this effect has already been issued by Senegal. The series of meetings generated good coverage in the local and national media, concluding with a one-hour radio show with Pascal Bongard from Geneva Call, Boubine Touré from ICBL-Senegal, and a CNAMS representative. More information: Boubine Touré, boubine@refer.sn ■



Photos: ICBL-Senegal

Turkey: Bar Society Supports Mine Survivors

The Initiative for a Mine-Free Turkey launched a legal advice service for mine and explosive remnants of war survivors, in cooperation with lawyers from the provinces bordering Syria. The _anliurfa Bar Society supports the activity through which survivors will be provided with pro bono legal support for their rights. Twenty-seven survivors participated in the inaugural sessions in Suruç and Akçakale, in May 2010. Carried out jointly with the Turkish Disabled People's Association, the program

is supported by Global Dialogue. According to Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, Turkey has started clearance of mines along its border with Syria, but at a slow pace and without sufficient transparency. Services to assist mine/ERW survivors remain inadequate, and there is no government coordination of victim assistance, nor a national strategic plan. More information: Muteber Ögreten, bilgi@mayinsizbirturkiye.org



Photo: Initiative for a Mine-Free Turkey

Awareness-Raising in Georgian Schools

The ICBL Georgian Committee continued its awareness raising activities in primary schools of the Kareli district in May 2010. Students tested their knowledge on landmines, cluster munitions and basic safe behavior through games

and friendly competitions. The district is contaminated by cluster munition remnants and unexploded ordnance since the August 2008 conflict with Russia. More information: Maia Buchukuri, icblgc@gmail.com ■



Photo: ICBL Georgian Committee

Campaigning in Iraq

In March 2010, the Iraqi Alliance for Disability Organizations hosted a national conference on the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. Held with financial support from Mercy Corps, the event brought together the Minister of Environment, representatives of the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Civil Society, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, paralympic athletes, Iraqi non-governmental organizations and members of the media. A three-day capacity-building meeting followed the event, and brought together 25 leader mine survivors

from all Iraqi provinces. The meeting focused on the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Advocacy activities by the IADO since early 2010 also included visits to elementary schools to raise awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities, and a meeting with the Kuwait ambassador. In addition, computer skills training was provided to ten persons with disabilities including mine survivors.

More information: Moaffak Al-Khafaji, moaffak61@yahoo.com ■

Uganda: Landmine Survivors Demand Accountability

On the occasion of the International Criminal Court Review Conference in Uganda, Kampala, in early June 2010, ICBL Ambassador Margaret Arach Orech called on government of Uganda to fulfill its promises to provide compensation to the thousands of people with war-related injuries, including mine survivors. "During the ICC Review Conference, when so much attention is on the crimes committed during conflict, the fact that people have been injured by the war and still have not received any compensation from

the government is a major oversight," she said.

A five-year comprehensive plan for addressing the needs of survivors was developed in 2006 by the Disability Department within the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, but implementation of this plan is lagging behind. Support for survivors and persons with disabilities in Uganda remains largely inadequate. More information: Margaret Arach Orech, Uganda Landmine Survivors Association, margaret@icbl.org ■

Kathmandu Journalists Briefed on Mine Ban Treaty

Advocacy and awareness-raising activities by the Ban Landmines Campaign Nepal (NCBL) since the beginning of the year included a briefing on the landmine issue in the presence of the minister of Peace and Reconstruction, Mr Rakam Chemjong, and attended by fifty media representatives. In February, the NCBL organized a symposium on the responsibilities and obligations related to the

status of State Party to the Mine Ban Treaty, aimed at Parliamentarians and security forces members. On 1 March, NCBL representatives including mine survivors met with the chairperson and other members of National Human Rights Commission, who indicated they would issue a recommendation for Nepal to join the Mine Ban Treaty. ■

What's the Cartagena Action Plan Priority in your Country?

“Thailand needs to speed up its mine clearance activities in order to keep the commitments made in its deadline extension request. Time passes by quickly. Nine years is not that long! For victim assistance, many good things have happened, but still there are some gaps, such as prostheses repairing and proactive support on income-generating activities for survivors.” ■



Shushira Chonhenchob
ICBL Victim Assistance
Focal Point, Thailand

“As a donor country, France has the responsibility to support international cooperation and assistance for affected states. Thanks to campaign mobilization in my country, since last year the government has been funding new projects, especially on victim assistance. But the global French amount supporting mine action still needs to increase, and should be based on a clear strategy!” ■



Marion Libertucci
Handicap International
France

“We expect that the national Law on Mine Action in Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH) will be adopted by the end of 2010. If fully implemented, it will foster a more effective national ownership of mine action. Another extremely important step we urge the Federation of BiH to take is the establishment of the Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, which would help implementing the new law. To better protect affected communities and victims, we are also eagerly awaiting the ratification of

the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Parliament agrees on the ratification but we're still waiting for the Presidency's decision.” ■



Amir Mujanovic
Landmine Survivors
Initiative, Bosnia &
Herzegovina

“Peru took up a special role at the Cartagena Summit, as Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on victim assistance and socio-economic reintegration. It must live up to this position! This should start with ensuring better data collection at the national level in order to provide assistance that truly answers the needs of survivors. Peru should keep nurturing partnerships with NGOs in service provision.” ■



Ana Maria Watson
Amnesty International,
Peru