Finish the Job! Says Nobel Prize winning campaign on 15th anniversary of Mine Ban Treaty

Nobel peace laureate Jody Williams, International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) campaigners, and landmine survivors from nearly 40 countries are calling on governments to commit to eradicating antipersonnel landmines in years, not decades. The call comes at the opening of the Twelfth Meeting of States Parties (12MSP) to the Mine Ban Treaty, taking place from 3-7 December in Geneva. More than 100 governments are expected to participate.

The 12MSP begins 15 years to the day after the Mine Ban Treaty was opened for signature in Ottawa in 1997 where it was signed by 122 states. “Twenty years after we began the international campaign and 15 years after achieving the Mine Ban Treaty, we are close to global acceptance of the landmine ban, and we are closing in on a mine-free world. Now we need to finish the job to ensure landmines don't claim any more limbs and lives,” said Williams. The ICBL delegation also includes landmine survivor Tun Channareth of Cambodia, who accepted the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of ICBL, alongside Williams.

Since the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty vast tracts of land have been cleared. Nineteen states have declared their territories mine-free to date and four more - the Republic of Congo, Denmark, Jordan, and Uganda - are expected to announce completion of mine clearance at this year’s meeting. More than 46 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed under the treaty. Most importantly, the annual casualty rate from landmines and explosive remnants of war has decreased dramatically since the treaty came into force.

Today 160 countries, or more than 80% of countries worldwide, have joined the treaty, with another – Poland – expected to announce its ratification during the meeting. With Poland, all of the European Union and all of NATO, with the exception of the United States, will be States Parties.

Serious concerns to be raised at the 12MSP include use of antipersonnel landmines by Syria in 2012 and the use of these weapons by non-state armed groups in six additional countries. Three States Parties remain in violation of the treaty, having missed their deadlines for destroying all their stockpiled antipersonnel mines: Belarus, Greece, and Ukraine. A growing number of states have requested extensions to their mine clearance deadlines since 2008. This number is expected to exceed 30, with four new requests anticipated during the 12MSP.

“It is sad to note on this International Day of Persons with Disabilities [3 December] that there has been a decrease in direct financial support for victim assistance programs,” said ICBL Ambassador Tun Channareth. “Ensuring access to education, job training, and other services that victims need, and having victims involved in decisions that affect their lives is essential to realizing the promise of the treaty,” he said.

States discussions during the 12MSP are expected to include: the number of states still remaining outside the treaty, the need for increased mine clearance to ensure land is released as soon as possible, completing stockpile
destruction, and fulfillment of the rights and needs of survivors under the treaty.

Representatives from many states that have not yet joined the treaty are expected to attend, including Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, United States, and Vietnam.

Civil society has been a driving force behind implementation and monitoring of the landmark treaty which brings together NGOs, governments, and international organizations, and which has been an effective catalyst for mine action globally.

“This week, and for as long as it takes, we will continue to challenge the international community to finish the job we started some 20 years ago, to definitively end use of these weapons, and to fully address consequences of past use, and to do so as quickly as possible. The giant steps taken over the past 15 years prove that this is not only possible, but imminent,” said ICBL Director, Katarzyna Derlicka.

Links:
• MBT Video - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaYp4vXMUWM
• ICBL 20th Anniversary Video - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUkDYneqeuE
• ICBL 20th Anniversary Homepage http://www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/Library/News-Articles/20th_anniversary
• ICBL on Twitter at https://twitter.com/minefreeworld
• ICBL on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/minefreeworld
• International Campaign to Ban Landmines on Flickr at www.flickr.com/photos/minefreeworld
• Landmine Monitor 2012 and related documents at www.the-monitor.org/lm/12 .
• Detailed individual country profiles for all countries of the world and seven other areas are available at www.the-monitor.org/cp

ENDS
For more information or to schedule an interview, contact:
• Jared Bloch, ICBL-CMC Media and Communications Consultant, Geneva (GMT+1), mobile +41-78-683-4407, email jared@icblcmc.org