

# A Finite Problem That Can Be Resolved

On 25 October 2010 as Disarmament Week opened, the ICBL addressed the United Nations' First Committee on Disarmament and International Security. Zach Hudson from the United States Campaign to Ban Landmines called on all states to ensure the landmine issue remains high on the disarmament agenda: "We as civil society, governments, and international organizations, can and have made a big difference," he said. "Our work is not done yet, but it is a finite problem that can be resolved."

*Remarks to the United Nations First Committee (Disarmament and International Security)  
Delivered by Zach Hudson of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines, ICBL Delegation  
New York, United States  
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Delegates and Colleagues,

I would like to start my statement with a quote to remind us why the landmine issue should remain at the top of the disarmament agenda until the Mine Ban Treaty has universal membership and is fully implemented. Perhaps some of you know the source of this quote, 25-year-old landmine survivor and ICBL campaigner from Cambodia Song Kosal. While in a recent meeting between landmine survivors and the U.S. State Department as part of the U.S. government's review of its landmine policy, Kosal paused for a moment to catch her breath before trying to explain what it was like to be the victim of a landmine. Her voice breaking but mastering control of it, she bravely told the listeners, "I just want my life back. I just want my childhood back, but this will never happen. I want to be a normal girl and get married, but this will be so difficult now. It's hard to explain how quickly everything changed. One minute I was a young girl of six playing and laughing with my family in the backyard. The next minute, with a flash and a bang, my brother was dead, and I was lying in a hospital after losing my leg. Nothing would ever be the same again. And for what? I know that what's done is done, but you cannot let this happen to anyone else ever again...."

We have come a long way since Kosal had her landmine accident. At the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World, the Second Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty, States Parties reflected proudly on 10 years of accomplishments.

To begin with, **casualty rates** over the last few years have descended below the 5,000 mark, a sharp contrast to the annual estimates in the mid-1990's of somewhere around 20,000 new casualties per year. This represents a dramatic drop in loss of human lives and limbs, although we know many casualties go unreported, and the real numbers are probably much higher.

In the area of **clearance**, over 1300km<sup>2</sup> of mine-contaminated land has been cleared thanks to the hard work of deminers worldwide, releasing much needed land for resettlement, farming, roads, schools, and hospitals. Just this past year five states declared themselves mine-free: Albania, Greece, Rwanda, Zambia, and recently Nicaragua. The region of Central America is now again free of landmines. A total of 16 States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty have declared that they finished their clearance obligations, an achievement that would not be possible without the commitment and support of states and civil society alike.

Over 45 million **stockpiled landmines** have been destroyed, ensuring that these mines will never be used and never put a human life at risk.

These indicators clearly demonstrate that with determination and dedication, we as civil society, governments, and international organizations, can and have made a big difference.

In terms of universalization, we regret that no new State has become Party to the Treaty since November 2007. At the same time, the **norm of a ban on antipersonnel landmines** has held firm. Nearly all of those states outside of the Mine Ban Treaty are in de facto compliance with most of its provisions. Only one state has laid significant numbers of mines in recent years—Myanmar. Virtually no state has traded in the weapon for more than a decade. Only a handful are still actively producing—notably India, Pakistan, and Myanmar.

In addition, at the Cartagena Summit, the U.S. delegation announced that the **United States** would begin a formal review of its landmine policy. Since then, the National Security Council has led an inter-agency review involving both the Departments of State and Defense and in consultation with key legislators, NGO leaders, government officials from States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, and landmine survivors. It is our hope that the U.S., which has contributed more to mine action than any other country in the world, will now strengthen this support with a pledge to join the treaty.

So the possibility of a truly mine-free world is looking brighter than ever. **But the job is not done yet.**

Reaching the treaty's goal to "end the suffering caused by antipersonnel landmines," including the full protection and promotion of rights of landmine victims, is possible in "our lifetime," as States Parties reaffirmed in the Final Declaration of the Cartagena Summit.

It's not often states have the opportunity to achieve victory over a humanitarian problem. This opportunity must not be missed and should inspire us all. To achieve this, strong, long-term political commitment and resources by States Parties and donor organizations are required.

The Cartagena Action Plan outlines some of the challenges we still face and gives States Parties an ambitious and strong plan to address them.

To begin with, **39 states are still not on board**. There can be no more excuses as to why a state cannot ban this weapon when its horrendous humanitarian consequences so clearly outweigh its military utility.

Hundreds of thousands of survivors worldwide still need to see their rights respected and their needs met. States need to heed the call made by landmine survivors to give priority to socio-economic inclusion, so they can once again be productive members of their communities.

More than 70 states and territories are **still affected by landmines** to various degrees, and far too many States Parties have been unable to meet the Mine Ban Treaty's 10 year deadline. We ask States Parties requesting more time to clear mined areas to present clear and ambitious plans to complete clearance, and we ask those who have been granted more time to faithfully implement their plans.

At the same time, we urge donors to provide **multi-year support** to enable States Parties to implement clearance and victim assistance plans. We also call on mine-affected states to increase their own contributions. And we call on all parties to think creatively, strategically and in a coordinated manner about how to get the job in the most efficient way.

Finally, four States Parties with a remaining obligation to destroy stockpiles missed their mandatory 4-year deadline: Belarus, Greece, Ukraine and Turkey. These cases need to be quickly resolved so these states can come back into compliance with the treaty. States not Parties such as USA, China and Russia still stockpile over 160 million antipersonnel mines.

In order to finish the job, we need to keep up the momentum that we have generated over the last decade. So we would like to say "**Keep up the energy**" in your efforts to eradicate landmines. We ask you to come to the 10th Meeting of the States Parties this November with good news on recent accomplishments or clear plans to get the job done soon. We ask you to please vote in support of the UN General Assembly resolution calling for the universalization and implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty. Half of the states that have not yet joined the treaty vote in favor of the resolution to show their support for the treaty's humanitarian objectives. It is time for those who continue to abstain, to instead vote in favor.

This year we are also celebrating the entry into force of the **Convention on Cluster Munitions**, whose 1st Meeting of the States Parties will take place in Lao PDR in November. We call on all States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty to come on board the new convention, and vice versa. We count on you.

We must always remember that every casualty number is a real person-it's your brother, your sister, your wife, your husband, your son, your daughter that we are protecting. And we ask you, as the UN famously asked in its 2005 public service announcement, "If landmines were here ..." -meaning in your backyard, on your street, or in your daughter's soccer field- "...would we allow them anywhere?"

Our work is not done yet, but it is a finite problem that can be resolved. But if at any point we get bogged down in technical complexities or politics, or waver in our commitment, we must remember that we are protecting our family. In the end, we are protecting Kosal... because Kosal could be your daughter... because Kosal is your daughter... because Kosal is everyone's daughter.

Thank you.