

Governments Urged to Eliminate Landmines Within Years, Not Decades

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Tenth annual meeting of Mine Ban Treaty opens in Geneva

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

Geneva, 29 November 2010 -- Sustained political engagement and financial support is needed to overcome the global landmine problem, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) said today at the opening of an annual meeting of the 1997 treaty banning antipersonnel landmines.

"The threat posed by landmines is still urgent, but it is also a finite problem that can be resolved if governments remain committed until all mined areas are cleared, all survivors enjoy the rights and economic possibilities available to others, and all stockpiles are destroyed," said Sylvie Brigot, executive director of the ICBL. "Much progress has been made over the past decade, but governments need to keep up the energy to achieve the goal of a mine-free world."

The Tenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty will be held at the United Nations in Geneva from 29 November to 3 December 2010. Representatives from most of the 156 governments that have joined the treaty are expected to attend, as well as China, Russia, the United States and other observer delegations from the 39 states that have not joined the treaty. An ICBL delegation of more than 120 campaigners from 33 countries, including landmine survivors, is participating in the meeting.

"This meeting must address a range of implementation issues if the Mine Ban Treaty is to be fully realized," said Eva Veble, Head of the Mine Action Unit at DanChurchAid. "States Parties and all stakeholders should look at how they can make a more efficient and effective use of available resources to get the job done, and how they can ensure even closer cooperation."

Issues of concern for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines at the meeting include:

- Six mine-affected states parties-**Chad, Colombia, Denmark, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and Zimbabwe**-have indicated that they will not be able to complete clearance of their mined areas within the ten-year treaty-mandatory deadline and have requested deadline extensions for the meeting to decide on.
- Four States Parties that collectively stockpile over 10 million antipersonnel mines-**Belarus, Greece, Turkey and Ukraine**-have missed the treaty-mandated four-year deadline for destroying their landmine stockpiles and are now in violation of the Mine Ban Treaty.
- More than a decade after ratifying the Mine Ban Treaty, **Venezuela** is the only mine-affected State Party that has not yet started clearance operations.
- The **United Kingdom** was granted a 10-year mine clearance deadline extension in 2008 but is not fulfilling part of its terms. It finished clearance of three mined

areas, as planned, but has not announced any further plans to clear the remaining 113 mined areas.

- There are highly disturbing allegations that members of the armed forces of **Turkey** (a State Party to the treaty) used antipersonnel mines in 2009. These are currently the subject of a legal investigation.
- Accessibility of victim assistance services declined in 2009 in seven States Parties-**Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, Colombia, DR Congo, Guinea-Bissau and Jordan**.
- Only 9% of international funding for mine action goes to victim assistance, a woefully insufficient amount. The majority of countries still do not provide assistance based on the number of survivors and their needs.
- At the meeting, States Parties will consider how to encourage more sustainable international cooperation and assistance. The ICBL calls on donor to provide multi-year funding, to enable states to implement clearance and victim assistance plans in a predictable, sustainable way.
- For the second year in a row, the **United States** will attend the meeting as observer. It has been one year since the US announced that it would begin a formal review of its landmine policy, but no decision on joining the treaty has been made.

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Background

Adopted in 1997, the Mine Ban Treaty entered into force on 1 March 1999. The treaty comprehensively bans all antipersonnel mines, requires destruction of stockpiled mines within four years, requires destruction of mines already in the ground within 10 years, and urges extensive programs to assist the victims of landmines.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines is a global network in over 90 countries, working for a world free of antipersonnel landmines. In 1997, the ICBL received the Nobel Peace Prize together with its founding coordinator Jody Williams for its efforts to bring about the Mine Ban Treaty.

Additional information is available in Landmine Monitor 2010:
www.the-monitor.org/lm/2010

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