

Mine Ban Activists Demand Concrete Action from Governments at World Summit on Landmines

Cartagena, November 30th 2009 -- Over a thousand activists, survivors, mine action practitioners, development experts and government representatives from around the world will converge in Colombia this week for the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World, including dozens of high-level government representatives and dignitaries. The Cartagena Summit, running from November 29th-December 4th, is the second five-year Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty, and is aimed at evaluating progress made and identifying actions required to fully realize the vision of a mine-free world.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), with a delegation 400-strong representing every region in the world, is calling on governments to go beyond promises and declarations of support and instead to commit to concrete, time-bound actions to achieve our shared goals on victim assistance and meeting mine clearance and stockpile destruction deadlines.

"The Mine Ban Treaty has made tremendous, tangible progress in the past ten years both in alleviating the human suffering caused by antipersonnel landmines and the prevention of new suffering," said Steve Goose, ICBL's Head of Delegation. "It has brought about a near halt to use of the weapon globally, the destruction of tens of millions of stockpiled mines, and a huge expansion in mine clearance, risk education and victim assistance programs. This success is largely due to the ongoing collaboration between governments and civil society. This partnership needs to be reaffirmed and maintained more than ever in this next, more challenging phase in the life of the Mine Ban Treaty."

Despite the fact that casualty rates have steadily decreased over the past decade, victim assistance has made the least progress of the major mine action sectors in terms of funding and the provision of services. Hundreds of thousands of people urgently need more or better assistance.

"Over the last ten years, we survivors have done a lot for ourselves and for other survivors. We are asking for more government action, but we are not beggars," stated Tun Channareth, ICBL Ambassador and survivor from Cambodia. "Concrete commitments to mine clearance, risk education, and rehabilitation and economic inclusion of survivors are in the interests of everyone as they will bring increased peace, security, and prosperity."

Despite the clearance of over 2.2 million emplaced antipersonnel mines since 1999, meeting the 10-year treaty deadline for mine clearance is also proving to be a formidable challenge. "Fifteen States Parties with mine clearance deadlines in 2009 have been granted extensions last year, and four additional states are requesting extensions this week," said Tamar Gabelnick, ICBL's Treaty Implementation Director. "We need governments at this Summit to commit politically and financially to ensure that mine clearance deadlines are met and resources are in place for heavily-affected states that need them."

Eighty percent of the world's countries are party to the Mine Ban Treaty with only 39 states - including China, India, Pakistan, Russia and the United States - having yet to join the treaty. However, the majority of these countries are de facto complying with key treaty provisions such as no use, trade, or production of mines. Myanmar and Russia are the only states using antipersonnel mines in recent years, along with non-state armed groups in about seven countries.

"In less than ten years, antipersonnel mines have been stigmatized as an unacceptable weapon worldwide, including for countries that remain outside of the treaty", said Sylvie Brigot, Executive Director of the ICBL. "This can also be seen by increased signs of support by states not party that are attending the Cartagena Summit. This further reaffirms for us that a mine-free world is a mission possible."