

Estonia joins the Mine Ban Treaty!

Author/Origin: Sue Wixley wixley@icbl.org

(Friday 14 May 2004) The Baltic nation's long-awaited accession may spur others...

It may not have grabbed headlines like Estonia's new membership of the EU and NATO, but the country's accession to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty is most significant:

- Internationally, it sends a signal that Tallinn is committed to tackling humanitarian problems and recognises the value of collective action in doing so.
- Domestically, the move will boost efforts to clear the unexploded ordnance left behind from World War II and the Soviet era.
- In the region, Estonia's accession turns the spotlight on the three countries in the EU that remain outside the treaty: Finland, Latvia and Poland. It is hoped that these and other non-members will join the treaty in the coming months ahead of the 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World, a major milestone in the life of the Mine Ban Treaty.

The 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World, the treaty's first review conference, takes place from 29 November to 3 December in Kenya's capital.

The Mine Ban Treaty entered into force under international law five years ago. It prohibits any use, production or trade of antipersonnel mines, and requires destruction of stockpiled mines in four years, clearance of mined areas in ten years, and assistance to mine victims.

Estonia completed its accession formalities at the United Nations in New York on 12 May.