

Leaders urged: follow through your commitments

The tremendous progress in banning antipersonnel mines must not mask the reality that governments are not doing nearly enough to help landmine survivors and get mines out of the ground quickly, campaigners said today on the eve of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World.

“Failure to fully address the needs and rights of the ever-growing number of landmine survivors could undercut the remarkable achievements of decreased landmine use, production, trade and stockpiling of the weapon”, said Ms. Jody Williams, co-laureate with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize. “Governments must renew and even expand their political and financial commitments if our joint effort to eradicate antipersonnel mines is to succeed,” she added.

The Summit is the first **review conference of the Mine Ban Treaty**, or Ottawa Convention. Gaps in the provision of assistance to survivors and the slow pace of mine clearance are two weak spots in an otherwise encouraging performance, the ICBL noted. The marked drop in the use of antipersonnel mines worldwide since the Mine Ban Treaty came into effect five years ago was welcomed as one of its great achievements.

The **week-long conference**, to be hosted by Kenya and held under the auspices of the United Nations, opens on 29 November. The ICBL’s 350-plus delegation of landmine survivors, researchers and lobbyists from 80 countries will join more than 500 government diplomats, United Nations representatives and others to **review the Treaty’s achievements and adopt an Action Plan** for the critical period ahead.

“Increased and sustained support from national governments and international donors is desperately needed for healthcare and disability sectors in mine-affected countries”, said Ms. Sheree Bailey of Handicap International and Landmine Monitor’s Victim Assistance Research Coordinator.

“Donor countries should boost their contributions and **mine-affected countries should ensure that resources are used in the smartest possible way** so that the 10-year deadline for removal of emplaced mines is met,” added Mr Mohammed Shohab Hakimi, who chairs the Campaign’s working group on mine action.

The ICBL’s authoritative Landmine Monitor Report found **inadequacies in at least one aspect of survivor assistance** in about 80 percent of the 65 countries with new mine casualties last year. Even when services exist, mine survivors struggle to gain access to them when they are too far away or are prohibitively expensive.

Tun Channareth, pictured here with his daughters in Cambodia, is in Nairobi for the Summit on a Mine-Free World. He urged governments to do more for mine-affected communities. Credit: Kike Figaredo.

There are between **300,000 and 400,000 landmine survivors in at least 121 countries**. Funding for victim assistance has dropped in recent years in contrast to a heartening increase in funding for mine action. The provision of assistance for survivors is a unique feature of the Mine Ban Treaty.

“ Finding ways to earn a living is still the number one priority for survivors in mine-affected communities”, said Mr Tun Channareth, ICBL Ambassador and landmine survivor from Cambodia, as he urged government and other donors to ensure that survivors and their communities have access to income generating skills and opportunities, housing, education and health.

“The promise of a mine-free world is now within reach and **we will keep up the pressure on governments to deliver”**, said Ms Liz Bernstein, Coordinator of the ICBL.