

Nairobi Summit: A Springboard for Action toward a Mine-Free World

At the close of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World today the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) vowed to keep up the pressure until the world has spurned antipersonnel mines and fully implemented the Mine Ban Treaty.

“The Summit has given us renewed energy, focus and commitment for the hard work ahead”, said Ms. Jody Williams, Co-Laureate with the ICBL of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, while noting the twin priorities of accelerated mine clearance and comprehensive assistance for the needs and rights of survivors. “The success of the Nairobi Summit will be measured by how vigorously the Action Plan adopted this week is carried out,” added Williams.

One of the highlights of the Nairobi Summit, the First Review Conference of the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, was Ethiopia’s ratification on the opening day, 29 November. This brings the number of treaty State Parties to 144 and now includes all of sub-Saharan Africa except Somalia.

The Campaign was pleased overall with the outcome of the Summit and its key product, an Action Plan that commits governments to a wide range of measures to combat antipersonnel mines over the next five years.

The Nairobi Declaration and Action Plan were welcomed as “concrete and forward-looking” by the ICBL. But it noted that some issues of concern were not addressed, including whether mines with sensitive fuzes are banned, what acts are allowed during joint military operations with non-State Parties who may use antipersonnel mines and the number of antipersonnel mines retained for training.

Campaigners were encouraged by the participation in the Nairobi Summit of 23 States not Party to the Treaty, including China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia and Sri Lanka. This significant group of observer states points to broad support for the goals of the Mine Ban Treaty.

“Even countries outside of the Mine Ban Treaty are taking steps toward it and complying in many ways. This shows that an international norm that rejects landmines is taking hold”, said Mr. Stephen Goose, head of the ICBL’s delegation to the Nairobi Summit.

The United States, which in February 2004 abandoned its long-held goal of eventually eliminating all antipersonnel mines and joining the treaty, was absent from the Summit.

The Campaign also recognized the importance of continuing to persuade armed opposition groups to give up the weapon. According to the ICBL’s authoritative *Landmine Monitor Report*, rebels and other Non State Actors used antipersonnel mines in at least 16 countries in 2003 and 2004, including for the first time Bolivia, Bhutan, Iraq and Peru. Four governments have been fingered for using antipersonnel mines in the last year: Georgia, Myanmar, Nepal and Russia.

ICBL Ambassador Ms. Song Kosal, a landmine survivor from Cambodia and one of the ICBL’s 350-strong delegation to the Nairobi Summit, promised to hold governments to account. “This is a great action plan on paper. It gives us strong hope that when we return in 2009 for the next Review Conference we will be much, much closer to our goal of a mine-free world,” said Kosal.