

Landmine Treaty

First Conference of the Parties

The first meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, concluded on 7 May, 1999, in Maputo, Mozambique, with the adoption of a Final Declaration (see page 182). The Convention, which came into force on 1 March this year, by May 1999 had been signed by 135 countries and ratified by 80.

A total of some 1,200 people attended the five-day Conference, including representatives of 108 countries.

In her address to the Conference, UN Deputy Secretary-General *Louise Fréchette*, said that the Maputo meeting was very important in order both to maintain political momentum, secure more signatures and ratifications quickly and to ensure the Convention's implementation. She noted that even after the coming into force of the treaty, new mines are still being laid. Implementing the treaty means not only eliminating the production, stockpiling, use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Perhaps most important, she said, it means ensuring the destruction of stockpiles as required by the Convention.

Participants were reminded that some countries still retain millions of mines and will need the help of the international community in destroying them. Other States Parties to the Convention with greater resources and expertise have a special obligation to help.

In the "Maputo Declaration," States Parties reaffirm their unwavering commitment to the total eradication of anti-personnel mines. They also renew their commitment to the treaty's universal adoption, and appeal for technical assistance to mine-affected countries. States Parties also stress the importance of assistance to landmine victims.

As further evidence of the international momentum towards banning landmines, on 7 May, Chad became the eightieth country to ratify the Convention.

In the months preceding the Maputo meeting, extensive work throughout the region helped to generate new national campaigns – in Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Somalia. Attention generated by the Conference, along with extensive work by national campaigns resulted in unilateral ban decisions by South Africa and Mozambique. Malawi and Swaziland announced their support for the Ottawa process and their intention to sign the treaty in December.

Landmine Monitor Report

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines presented its first report monitoring implementation of the 1997 Ottawa Convention at UN Headquarters on 20 May. The 1,100-page "Landmine Monitor Report

1999: Towards a Mine-Free World," was launched at the first meeting of States Parties to the Convention.

The report was presented by *Jodi Williams* – who with the International Campaign was a co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize – and *Stephen Goose*, Programme Director of the Arms Division of Human Rights Watch, who drew attention to the fact that the United States was reserving the right to use anti-personnel landmines in joint NATO operations, despite the fact that 17 of NATO's 19 members had signed the Ottawa Convention, which did not allow its States Parties to support violators. If the United States, as a non-signatory, were to use anti-personnel landmines in joint NATO operations, signatory countries would be put at risk if they failed to intervene. *Jodi Williams* called for a NATO-wide policy of not using anti-personnel landmines in any joint operations, while also noting that, in Kosovo, Serb forces were using anti-personnel landmines, which affected refugees and would affect their return.

The concept of the Landmine Monitor had developed a year ago as a system whereby civil society would participate in monitoring the Treaty, which contained limited verification measures. It was part of a global effort to hold government accountable for their commitments to the Treaty and their public statements, she said.

The Report notes that sixteen countries are currently producing anti-personnel landmines or reserved the right to do so, including the United States, China, the Russian Federation and Singapore, but 38 countries have ceased production altogether. China participated in the Maputo Conference as an observer State, but the United States attended in an unofficial capacity.

After Maputo, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines had decided to target the United States for several reasons. It was acknowledged that when that country signed a treaty, it put its full weight behind compliance, and that would help to ensure that the international norm became firmly rooted.

The speaker recalled that two African signatories had used anti-personnel landmines in 1998 – Senegal and Guinea-Bissau – and Angola continued to do so.

The report chronicles compliance, as well as how much money has been given to mine clearance and victim assistance. It was created in the framework of government/civil society cooperation and was offered in the spirit of partnership. The campaign and the Treaty were not designed to embarrass States or persons, but rather to establish law and ensure compliance, Stephen Goose said.

He stressed that the report was the first example of non-governmental organisations and civil society coming together in a coordinated and ongoing fashion to

monitor a humanitarian law or disarmament treaty. The landmine monitoring system had three major elements: a global network; a public database; and the report itself. The global reporting network included more than 80 researchers in over 80 countries providing comprehensive information on the situation in every nation. The public database was housed in Mines Action, Canada and would be updated regularly. The report would be

provided to governments, the press and the public each year at the annual meeting of States Parties. It contained: information on every country; chapters on global mine clearance; victim assistance programmes; the political elements of production, stockpiling, trade and use of anti-personnel mines; and included contributions from United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). □