

Because common problems arise with every new demining effort, much time can be saved by the sharing of international experience. To this end, the UNDP has done a pre-feasibility study on the creation of a new International Mine Action Centre to be located in a developing country which could share experience, promote networking and provide a forum for governments and NGOs to advance the work of de-mining. Initiatives such as this could play a vital role in eliminating those mines already in the ground, Ahmed concluded.

Mr. Steve Goose
International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Steve Goose of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines said that progress to date has been an excellent example of governments world wide listening to the concerns of "civil society". The partnership that has been built must be maintained, he stressed, to ensure that the "new mind-set" is accepted: the view that the use of landmines is a crime.

The process of negotiation has fine-tuned the Treaty, and the result is a good treaty. However, stressed Goose, it must now be implemented. The mines now in the ground must be removed, and there must be help for the survivors of landmine accidents. Future improvements must include a ban on anti-handling devices for anti-vehicle mines and more severe restrictions on mines used for training. In addition, there must be a means to deal with "non-state" actors who play a role in setting landmines.

Goose noted that Canada is setting a good example by signing and ratifying the Treaty at the same time. He issued the challenge to other signing states to ratify the Treaty by the end of 1998. Meanwhile, much work remains to bring all nations into the Treaty.

The International Campaign will work with governments to achieve rapid, effective implementation, with the goal of achieving early entry into force. Many countries have said ratification will take two to three years, but Goose said the process must be achieved in months. Similarly, governments have undertaken to achieve destruction of stockpiles within four years and removal within ten, but Goose stressed the need to "start the clock ticking" on these deadlines.

Domestic legislation will be needed to implement the Treaty and all partners must work hard to universalize it.

Mr. Stephen Lewis
Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF

Stephen Lewis of UNICEF put a human face on the scourge of landmines with the story of Godfrey, a young boy of Northern Uganda. Godfrey lost both legs above the knees to a landmine while searching the forest for the grave of his father, killed in civil strife. There are 8,000 to 10,000 "Godfreys" every year, Lewis said.

Lewis called the Treaty "an historic step on the road to sanity", that would reverse a pattern of folly. He noted that it is an important step toward observance of UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child. The use of landmines by which children can be maimed and killed offends virtually every aspect of the Convention, including the right to life.

The Treaty has been a triumph for the International Campaign, Lewis said. While governments ignore "civil society" all too often, the present process has worked so well that all want to be of help. For their part, UNICEF representatives will be instructed to attempt to persuade governments to sign, intervene at the political and bureaucratic levels to get governments to ratify, and work to increase landmine awareness and victim assistance. The priorities are to get mines out of the ground, reduce the casualties and reduce the anguish of those who have been affected.

Elimination of landmines has become a force of history, Lewis said. He predicted that all countries would sign, challenging them to do it before July 1st —Canada Day, 1998. He stressed UNICEF's continuing commitment to maintain pressure on governments that haven't signed the Treaty, work with political and civil society to encourage ratification, and promote mine awareness and victim assistance.