

From Austria to Ottawa

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) for winning the Nobel Peace Prize. The decision taken by the Nobel Committee in Oslo honouring this worthy cause corresponds to the expectations of millions of people. This unprecedented worldwide coalition working toward a global convention to ban anti-personnel (AP) mines has been rewarded.

Austria was among the few countries that worked with the ICBL from the beginning of what has become known as the Ottawa Process. As early as 1995, Austria was pursuing a total ban on AP mines through the CCW Review Conference, held in Vienna. The results of this conference, which continued in Geneva in 1996, clearly fell short of this objective. Another forum had to be found — a forum that allowed us to create a new international legal instrument banning the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines, as well as their destruction. As AP mines continue to take 2000 mine victims every month, it was clear that a fast track — the Ottawa Process — was needed.

Therefore, I welcomed and fully supported the Canadian initiative. Careful

consideration was given to how Austria could contribute effectively to the preparations and negotiations leading to the adoption of a total ban treaty. Our answer was to provide the draft for the treaty, and to devise an innovative way to pursue consultations on the text.

We should pursue, even more vigorously, our common goal — to rid the world of the evil of anti-personnel mines.

Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, tasked Austria with the elaboration of a draft convention. Austria distributed its first tentative version in November 1996, requesting comments and suggestions. After this first round of bilateral consultations, Austria hosted an Expert Meeting on the Text of a Total Ban Convention. From February 12 to 14, 1997, 111 states discussed the text of the treaty. Following these consultations, a thorough review was undertaken by Austria, and a second version of the treaty was distributed. Anew, many states transmitted their proposals to Austria. These proposals, with the

recommendations of the Expert Meeting on Compliance held in Bonn in April, are reflected in the final version of the Austrian draft.

The Brussels Conference, held in June 1996, considered the Austrian draft and forwarded it to the Oslo Diplomatic Conference where it served as the basis for negotiations. After amendments were made during the Oslo negotiations, the Austrian draft finally became the Convention. All of this was completed within a year, and was only made possible by the participation of more than 100 countries united behind one objective — to end the tremendous human suffering caused by AP mines.

During the past year, a broad coalition has emerged that cuts across most traditional dividing lines. It has proved that civil society can meaningfully interact with states, not only in building public pressure, but also at the negotiating table. Customary delineations between humanitarian law and concrete disarmament measures have been surmounted. Countries from all regions gathered and propelled the process, putting aside different views they might have had on other matters. Those countries,

most of them small and medium-sized states, even had to create the necessary structures and mechanisms. And in spite of all of these challenges, they have succeeded. What started out as a group of states taking the high moral ground became mainstream. Today, there is no doubt that an impressive majority of states will adhere to the Ottawa Convention.

In Ottawa, on December 3, I will sign the Convention with so many of my colleagues. For me, this will be an elating moment. But I will also think of the vast challenges still lying ahead of us.

I am strongly convinced that it would be wrong to relent in our efforts now. We have a valuable foundation on which we can build. This foundation encompasses the Convention, the broad coalition of states and civil society, political momentum, the increased focus on the mine crisis and, lastly, the knowledge that together, we can overcome these "hidden killers."

We should pursue, even more vigorously, our common goal — to rid the world of the evil of anti-personnel mines.

Wolfgang Schüssel
Austrian Vice-Chancellor
and
Federal Minister for
Foreign Affairs



Prosthetics and orthotics made and fitted at Central Hospital, Maputo.
Photo: Robert Semeniuk

Photographs reveal the Horror of Landmines

On November 26, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (CMCP) will open an exhibition of photographs that document the people and places ravaged by landmines. The exhibition, entitled *Landmines*, features the work of Robert Semeniuk, an award-winning photojournalist and author who is currently based in British Columbia.

Landmines was produced by the CMCP with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). It will be shown at the museum concurrently with the December 2-4 conference in Ottawa, at which the international treaty to ban the use of anti-personnel mines will be signed. The exhibition will continue until January 25, 1998, when it will be circulated across Canada as part of the CMCP's Travelling Exhibitions Program.

Robert Semeniuk will be at the CMCP on December 6 at 2 pm to conduct a tour of the exhibition.

Media Contact: (613) 991-4793.

The following organizations supported Robert Semeniuk's photography and research for this exhibition: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC-Geneva), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Cathay Pacific, Canadian International Demining Centre, World Vision, Oxfam, Co-operation Canada-Mozambique (COCAMO), Cambodia-Canada Development Program.