

A Maputo Conference Primer

Continued from page 3

ratification with the United Nations Secretary General. Since the Maputo Conference will take place at the beginning of May 1999, the 55 states that ratified the Ottawa Convention by the end of November 1998 will be States Parties in time for the Conference.

Who can attend the Maputo Conference?

All states and international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supportive of mine action are welcome to attend the Maputo Conference. According to Article 14 of the Ottawa Convention, states not party to the Convention, the United Nations, other relevant international organizations and institutions, regional organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and NGOs can participate in the meeting as observers. Every participating government or organization will have an opportunity to speak in the opening two days of general statements and be able to contribute to all other discussions during the FMSP.

The gathering of the world's nations in Maputo for the First Meeting of States Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention will be a critical step forward in our efforts to rid the world of an indiscriminate killer. The selection of a severely mine-affected country to host this critical meeting underlines the need for this new Convention to make a real difference to those who live with the daily terror of landmines. The challenges that face Mozambique are a reminder of our obligations to mine affected states, and the determination of the Mozambican people to overcome this man-made scourge is an inspiration to us all.

This treaty has in many ways broken the moulds which routinely shape international agreements – it is a most unconventional convention, if you will. Forged outside the norms of international diplomacy, it was built on an unprecedented



John Rodsted

THE MAPUTO CONFERENCE

A critical step forward for the landmine ban

alliance between committed civil society actors and middle powers who shared a common vision and an unshakable determination to deal urgently with the landmine issue.

Our Convention is still young, having entered into force on March 1st just fifteen months after first being opened for signature. In many cultures, there are collective rituals that mark the passage from youth to maturity: For our Convention,

This child's scars are a reminder of why nations are gathering in Mozambique.

Mozambique Mine Facts*

Population: 15.7 million

Per capita GDP: US \$134

Per capita spending on healthcare: US \$6.82

Treaty status: Signed December 3, 1997
Ratified August 25, 1998

Mine infestation

Estimated total number of mines:
approximately 250,000 to 500,000

Areas most affected: Along Zimbabwean border in the west; Zambezia and Tete provinces in the centre; and Maputo and Inhambane provinces in the south.

Casualties: Approximately 10,000 victims since signing of 1992 peace accord. Handicap International estimates that the annual incidence of new mine accidents has fallen from 600-720 in 1995 to 83 in 1998. A lack of adequate health resources contributes to a high fatality rate among victims.

*All figures, 1998



the Maputo Conference will be such a rite of passage. Now is the time for us to set in stone the pillars of our success, to transform an innovative, ad hoc diplomatic initiative into a humanitarian disarmament convention which will stand the test of time.

What does this mean in practical terms?

It means first of all, entrenching the openness and transparency of the Ottawa Process into our way of doing business as we implement this new Convention. The Maputo Conference is first and foremost an opportunity to exchange information within the mine action community – to make good our commitment under Article 6 to ensure full international cooperation in providing assistance to mine affected communities.

It also means welcoming to the table all who share our vision. Article 11 opens the door to states not party to the convention – as well as to a range of relevant international and non-governmental organizations such as the UN, the International Committee

of the Red Cross and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. There is a great deal of work before us, and all who will help in this noble effort should be welcomed.

As with any document, the Convention's obligations can be seen either as a "floor" by those who take them as a starting point, or as a "ceiling", by those who wish to fulfil only the precise minimum that is required. I encourage all of us to keep in mind the humanitarian objectives which inspired this Convention. This incredible process has been driven thus far by a genuine commitment to see an entire class of indiscriminate weapons removed from the world's arsenal. It has been shaped by a vision of a terrible wrong being undone – well within the lifespan of today's landmine survivors. Such an ambitious goal will not be achieved by those who fall back on minimalist interpretations of the treaty's obligations, but rather by those who fully embrace their responsibilities to the global community.

— Lloyd Axworthy,
Minister of
Foreign Affairs,
Canada