

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

Anti-personnel mines

The widespread deployment of anti-personnel mines, mainly in developing countries, is a massive human tragedy. These weapons annually kill or maim an estimated 26,000 people, the majority of them civilians. In 1996, Canada and other like-minded states began working toward a total ban on these weapons, and in December 1997, in Ottawa, 122 countries signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. The convention establishes a clear and unambiguous, legally-binding ban on all anti-personnel mines.

Canada's focus now is to have the convention ratified by the required 40 states so it becomes binding international law as soon as possible. Canada also remains committed to the convention's universalization and will continue to encourage non-signatory states to accede to it. Canada is contributing \$100 million over the next five years to help build international commitment to expand mine clearance and assistance to victims, to encourage all states to sign the convention, and to urge all signatories to ratify it quickly.

The first two projects from this fund have already been identified. Canada will contribute up to \$10 million to support mine action programs in war-torn Bosnia over the next five years. And, in support of the UN's role as the focal point for mine action, Canada has contributed \$2 million to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Clearance to help the UN undertake crucial assessment missions and surveys.

In March 1998, Canada hosted a working-level follow-up meeting which brought together key members of the international community to construct a framework for co-ordinated mine action. This framework will improve delivery efficiency and eliminate duplication in humanitarian mine clearance, mine awareness, and victim assistance programs.

Small arms

Small arms are by far the most numerous and widely dispersed weapons in the world today. They cause more bloodshed and suffering than all the weapons systems targeted through arms control and disarmament agreements. Over 90 per cent of all deaths in conflicts result from the use of small arms. There are estimates that more than 500 million military-style small arms are currently distributed around the world, and many more are being manufactured and exported. In the hands of terrorists and criminals, as well as the irregular militias and armed bands typical of internal conflict, these are true weapons of mass terror. And civilians are the primary victims. The proliferation and