

Mine Ban: Progress Report

Regular Report Provided by Canada on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban

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AP Mine Ban Convention Sets Ratification Record Momentum Behind Movement to Ban Landmines Continues to Grow

The foreign ministers of Austria, Canada, Norway and South Africa joined Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan in celebrating the fortieth ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel (AP) Mines and on Their Destruction, known as the Ottawa Convention. On September 16, Burkina Faso became the fortieth signatory to ratify, setting the date for the formal entry-into-force of the Convention.



Canapress Photo Service (Tom Hansen)

Burkina Faso Foreign Minister Alassane Ouédraogo holds a copy of his nation's ratification certificate while Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy looks on.

On March 1, 1999, the first day of the sixth month following the fortieth ratification, the Convention will become binding international law for every country that has ratified. On that day, the clock starts ticking for States Parties to comply with the obligations in the Convention — in particular, clearing AP mines from their land and destroying stockpiles. In addition, the Convention provides a comprehensive framework for international co-operation and assistance to mine-affected countries.

The four countries each made important contributions to the successful conclusion of the Ottawa Convention, among which: Austria provided the text of the draft Convention; Norway hosted the negotiations in September, 1997, leading to the adoption of the Convention text; South Africa chaired the Convention negotiations in Oslo; and Canada hosted the signing ceremony for the Ottawa Convention in December, 1997.

"This is a significant step toward a world free of anti-personnel mines," said Canada's Minister for Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy. "The Ottawa Convention is now more than a noble document, it has become a permanent part of international law. This has happened remarkably quickly and I commend all the countries that have signed and ratified the Convention for their leadership."

"A major breakthrough for ridding the world from the evil of anti-personnel mines and record speed for a treaty becoming effective," said Austria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wolfgang Schüssel. "We will closely watch the implementation of the ban, expose the culprits for the laying of new mines, like right now in Kosovo and Angola, and assist those suffering under the mines. Our moral obligation has become a legal one."

"The rapid ratification process is a clear expression of the determination of the international community to overcome the humanitarian challenge posed by anti-personnel mines. Governments, international organizations and NGOs must intensify their concerted efforts to translate the goals of the Convention into lasting results for the millions of affected people and communities worldwide," said Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Knut Vollebaek. "This marks a major step forward in ridding Africa, the most mine-afflicted continent, from these terrible weapons. (continued on page 2)

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