



## **CANADA AND THE GLOBAL LAND MINE CRISIS**

The proliferation of land mines across the globe is a tragedy of crisis proportions. More than 110 million anti-personnel land mines, or AP mines, are currently deployed in some 70 countries — most of them in the developing world. Tens of thousands of people have been killed or disabled by such mines — 90 per cent of them civilians, many of them children. On average, 500 new victims are added to this toll each week. The suffering extends far beyond those who are maimed and killed: AP mines terrorize entire communities and prevent hundreds of thousands of refugees from returning to their homes and farmlands.

Through painstaking work under a variety of programs, the international community clears about 100 000 AP mines annually. However, these efforts cannot begin to keep pace with the two to five million new AP mines that are deployed each year.

### **Canada's Approach**

Clearly, the land mine crisis poses a dual challenge of undoing existing damage and preventing further harm. Accordingly, Canada's efforts focus on two principal areas: land mine clearance and work toward a global ban on AP mines.

#### ***I. AP Mine Clearance and Assistance to Victims***

Canada provides both technical expertise and funding for international mine clearance operations. Canadian Forces experts have made substantial contributions to mine clearance operations around the world and have been instrumental in developing indigenous mine clearance capabilities in Angola and Cambodia. Canada has provided an initial contribution of \$200 000 to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and, through the Canadian International Development Agency, over \$5 million for UN-sponsored mine clearance in Angola and Cambodia since 1993. Canada also provides funding to the International Red Cross for medical treatment, including rehabilitation and artificial limbs for land mine victims.

#### ***II. Towards a Global Ban***

Recognizing the intolerable social, economic and human costs of the global land mine crisis — and the inability of clearance operations to keep pace with new mine deployments — the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defence announced in January 1996 a comprehensive unilateral moratorium on the production, export and operational use of AP mines. To encourage other countries to follow suit, Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy recently approved a Land Mine Action Plan for Canada, designed to catalyze global and regional action to ban AP mines.

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