

Countdown begins on Treaty commitments

With entry-into-force, the clock begins ticking on several important treaty deadlines: four years to destroy stockpiles, ten years to remove anti-personnel mines from the ground. The Ottawa Convention also provides a framework for international cooperation encouraging States Parties to provide technical and financial assistance to mine-affected countries.

The Convention's fortieth ratification (Burkina Faso) on September 16, 1998, triggered the countdown - the treaty would enter into force on the first day of the sixth month after the fortieth ratification was deposited. The 45 countries that ratified before the end of September 1998 thus became States Parties on March 1st. For each signatory state, the Convention enters into force on the first day of the sixth month after its ratification date.

ENTRY-INTO-FORCE

Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy unveil a plaque commemorating the entry-into-force of the AP Mine Ban Convention. Close to 200 diplomats, parliamentarians and NGO representatives gathered at the Lester B. Pearson headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs for the occasion.



J.M. Charisse, PMO

Youth Ambassador Kate Colwell waiting for the bells to ring at Holy Trinity Church in Saint John, NB.



Saint John Telegraph

Youth Ambassadors focus on mobilization

Since September 1998, the Youth Mine Action Ambassador (YMAA) Program has worked nationwide to educate youth and to harness their interest and activism in ridding the world of

landmines. Based in Ottawa, Montréal, Winnipeg, Vancouver and St. John, the five Youth Ambassadors have visited schools and community groups. Key issues and the complex effects of

landmines have been introduced through interactive

presentations, speaking events, simulation

games and role plays, and volunteer training.

Since our last report, the YMAA Program has focused on mobilizing youth to actively participate in the global campaign against landmines. The Ambassadors have concentrated on two key activities: Dance Without Fear, a nationwide awareness and fundraising event; and Regional Youth Conferences planned for May.

To date, Dance Without Fear events have taken place in Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver, with upcoming dances planned in Winnipeg and Saint John. In Ottawa on March 5, students from 21 area schools held a gala ball at the Museum of Civilization with the assistance of Youth Ambassador

Sophie Nichol Sauv . All funds raised through Dance Without Fear ticket sales go to the Canadian Landmine Action Fund to support demining and victim assistance.

Youth Ambassadors were also active in organizing local celebrations of the March 1st entry-into-force, with several of the Ambassadors supporting a Landmine Awareness Week. Landmine facts were broadcast during school announcements, displays were set up, video and simulation games were presented over lunch hours.

In Montreal, Youth Ambassador Melanie Gagnon participated in a press conference at City Hall, at

which the Mayor reaffirmed the city's support for the mine ban.

As the first year of the YMAA Program draws to a close, the year's work will culminate with five Regional Youth Conferences in May, entitled, Youth Working For A World Free of Landmines. The goals of the conference are to connect young people from all regions to build a national anti-landmines network.

For more information about the YMAA Program and the upcoming Regional Youth Conferences, contact the Secretariat Office at 613-241-4141 or by email at ymaap@sympatico.ca.

— Gail Zboch, YMAAP Secretariat

Right: Poster for anti-landmines benefit dances organized by Youth Ambassadors



Youth Ambassador Melanie Gagnon and Montreal Mayor Pierre Bourque.



Barbara Klunder