

The global landmine crisis is like a patient that is hemorrhaging. Before anything else can be done, the bleeding must be stopped and the patient stabilized. A ban on AP mines will do this, and provide the opportunity to deal effectively and definitively with the enormous challenges of assisting and rehabilitating the victims and clearing the existing mines.

With the spate of successful meetings held over the past several months, Canada is confident that a ban will be achieved this year. The coalition of the committed grows every day.

For example, in Harare, in early June, the 53 states meeting at the Summit of the OAU committed themselves to an African AP mine free zone. In the same week, in Lima, the OAS General Assembly reaffirmed the commitment of the 34 countries of the hemisphere to the goal establishing the Western Hemisphere as an AP mine free zone. The Foreign Ministers of the Central American countries and the Caribbean Commonwealth have already declared that their regions will be AP mine free by 1999.

And at the June (1997) conference in Brussels — which drew representatives from 155 countries and more than 100 NGOs — the movement experienced yet another breakthrough when 97 governments expressed their public support to the Ottawa Process by signing the Brussels declaration — a political declaration expressing support for the following:

- a comprehensive ban treaty - covering use, stockpiling, transfer and production;
- formal diplomatic negotiations to take place in Oslo from 1 - 21 September;
- forwards to the Oslo negotiations the draft Austrian treaty -- initially prepared by Austria and enhanced and refined under their meticulous pen in an extensive multilateral and bilateral consultative process which included the international experts meetings in Vienna and Bonn attended by more than 110 countries;
- the objective of signing, before the end of 1997, an AP mine ban treaty in Ottawa.

The Brussels Conference, like the others in the Ottawa Process focussed on all three dimensions of the AP mine challenge — what Canada has been calling the integrated agenda: the ban; victim assistance and mine clearance. At that conference, Canada was gratified to hear voices of support from world leaders such as the Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Anan, Desmond Tutu, and former US President Jimmy Carter.

Brussels was both a breakthrough and a turning point, where the collective committed set their compasses on a heading of true north: a December signing in Ottawa from December 2-4. In the few months, since Brussels, several other governments have joined the movement and expectations are rising that the numbers will continue to grow over the months ahead.

In the last eight months there has been an unprecedented level of activity in support of a ban. Not only have there been meetings in Africa and the Americas, the Swedish government hosted a gathering of countries from Central and Eastern Europe; Turkmenistan hosted a conference in June of Central Asian governments, and in July the ICRC and Government of the Philippines drew together Asia-Pacific representatives in Manila to discuss the issue.

In most cases, it is not governments that host or initiate these meetings. Civil society is the driving force behind them as was the case for this gathering and the one in New Delhi in August. The truly unique aspect of the campaign is the amazing partnership amongst publics, NGOs, international organizations and governments in working together to achieve the common goal of a ban.