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prevents the safe and productive use of land, roads and other infrastructure, impeding development and the ability of communities to prosper.

The dramatic humanitarian impact of these silent sentinels far outweighs their marginal military utility. Anti-personnel mines have been proven to be of little use to militaries, yet they are a long-term arsenal against civilians and an obstacle to sustainable development, the safe return of refugees to their homes and post-conflict reconstruction.

The movement for change

In the early 1990s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in development work and humanitarian assistance sounded

the alarm about AP mines. The human suffering caused by mines and the weapons' impediment to productive land use hindered reconstruction and sustainable development promoted by NGOs and local communities.

Thus began the global movement to ban anti-personnel mines, clear mined land and assist victims. This movement was later joined by states, such as Canada. This state-civil society partnership, combined with a unique form of fast-track diplomacy initiated by Canada, became known as the Ottawa Process. The result was the successful negotiation in 1997 of the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction* – the Ottawa Convention.

The Ottawa Convention: A framework for action

For its efforts leading to the realization of the Convention, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and its coordinator, Jody Williams, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. Both the NGO community and countries like Canada, however, knew that achieving the Convention was just the beginning. The real work began in implementing its terms.

The Ottawa Convention is unique in that it sets out both a comprehensive ban on a weapon that has been in common use for generations and a set of steps that must be undertaken to address the human suffering it causes.

During the period when the Convention was open for signature, 133 states signed, signalling their intention to adhere formally to the Convention at a later date, and, under international law, accepting that they must not do anything that undermines the Convention's object and purpose. On March 1, 1999 – with unprecedented speed – the Convention had been ratified by enough states to allow for its entry into force.

The call to ban AP mines originated from civil society organizations angered by the human suffering these weapons cause.



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