

At the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 participating NGOs were able to make oral statements, including in the PrepComs, and when there was a high number of requests to speak, NGOs were asked to speak through spokespersons. Most of the NGO interventions were also provided in written form, and in addition literally thousands of reports and position papers were provided by NGOs at their own expense.¹⁸ At the 2002 World Summit for Social Development all representatives of NGOs could speak at the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole, where 28 NGOs made statements. The number of interventions in plenary were limited, with nine NGOs selected to speak by the President of the Assembly in consultation with NGOs, and approved by the PrepCom – five were selected on the basis of geography, and four others were major international NGOs, active in the field of social development.

Similar arrangements were made for NGO participation in the process to establish the International Criminal Court.¹⁹ NGOs participated as observers, attending the plenary sessions and, unless otherwise decided, formal meetings of the Committee of the Whole and of subsidiary bodies. The NGOs were able to receive official documents and to make statements, through a limited number of their representatives, to the opening and closing sessions of the Conference. Written statements could be made in the quantities and languages preferred by the NGOs, at their own expense and provided that they were submitted on behalf of NGOs related to the work of the Conference and based on special competence. The NGO statements were not issued as official documents. Similar arrangements apply to NGO observers at the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority.²⁰

NGOs are broadly understood to have played an important role in the process leading to the landmines convention.²¹ Much of the NGO influence was advanced in the primary and traditional NGO style of engagement – through research, public education, and advocacy. These are critically important activities that take place mostly well away from the negotiating table, but a key feature of the landmines treaty process was the place it found for NGOs directly at the negotiating table.

From its earliest stages, the landmines campaign developed a culture of close consultation and cooperation among like-minded governments, international organizations, and NGOs. Informal strategy meetings and workshops involving all these sectors were key to setting the basic direction of the campaign and to defining the core objective, forging in the process a “strategic partnership between non-state actors and core pro-ban states.”²²

That cooperation carried over into the formal meetings of states as well. While a broad range of NGOs participated in the informal events, participation in the formal negotiating process came through the NGOs’ umbrella network, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). At the 1997 negotiating sessions in Vienna, Bonn, Brussels, and Oslo, including sessions of the five working groups, as well as the signing conference in Ottawa, the ICBL was at the table as an Observer delegation, with the same rights to speak and intervene throughout the proceedings as were available to international organizations – that is, full participation in the debate but without voting rights. The ICBL seat at the table followed from the 1996 Ottawa Conference that essentially launched the Ottawa Process. As host, Canada invited NGOs as full participants, assigning as many as five seats to the ICBL (essentially the ICBL Steering Committee) and two to Mines Action Canada (MAC).²³

¹⁸ This and the following group of examples are drawn from the “Reference Document on the participation of civil society in United Nations conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly during the 1990s” (Version 1, August 2001), prepared by the Office of the President of the Millennium Assembly, 55th session of the United Nations General Assembly (<http://www.un.org/ga/president/55/speech/civilsociety1.htm>).

¹⁹ See the Rules of Procedure for the United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court (A/CONF.183/6 23 June 1998). The description of NGO participation is also drawn from the report prepared by the Office of the President of the Millennium Assembly.

²⁰ Rule of Procedure of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority: *Title XVI. Observers*: “Non-governmental organizations ... invited by the Assembly which have demonstrated their interest in matters under the consideration by the Assembly [Rule 82 (1) e] ... may sit at public meetings of the Assembly, and upon the invitation of the President ... and may make oral statements in questions within the scope of their activities [Rule 82 (5)]. ... Written statements submitted by observers...within the scope of their activities which are relevant to the work of the Assembly should be made available by the Secretariat in the quantities and in the languages in which the statements are submitted” [Rule 82 (6)].

²¹ The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction.

²² Don Hubert, *The Landmine Ban: A Case Study in Humanitarian Advocacy*, Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Occasional Paper 42 (Providence, RI, 2000), p. 17.

²³ Interview, DFAIT Official.