

## **Land Mine Conference**

# **Countries fail to set deadline on ban**

**Canada disappointed, Axworthy plans to urge treaty by next year**

---

*The Ottawa Citizen*

Section A2, Sunday October 6, 1996

Reprinted with permission

---

**By Juliet O'Neill**

**Foreign affairs correspondent for The Ottawa Citizen**

Fifty countries issued a declaration calling for "the earliest possible conclusion" of a treaty banning anti-personnel land mines Saturday, but they failed at an Ottawa conference to agree on a deadline or a negotiating forum.

Defying such countries as the United States, which says it isn't ready to commit to a deadline, Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy, host of the conference, attempted to salvage the outcome by challenging the countries to return to Canada in December 1997 to sign a treaty ban that would come into effect in the year 2000.

Axworthy won sustained applause, over-the-top praise and a standing ovation from many delegations when he made the surprise announcement that he would write the foreign ministers of all 50 countries asking them to sign a ban treaty in 14 months.

However, he had not consulted delegates in advance about the proposal and could not say at a news conference how many countries were unofficially backing the idea or how many he expected would sign during a first round.

Half a dozen countries had been singled out at the conference for defying convention and unilaterally banning the mines altogether — Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Norway, Germany, the Philippines, Switzerland and Austria. Austria circulated draft treaty language at the conference. About 40 countries have called for an immediate ban and dozens, including Canada, have taken partial measures, unilaterally banning mine exports, halting production and destroying some stockpiles. Canada has had a moratorium on production, exports and use since January and is reducing a stockpile of 90,000 by two-thirds.

"I am convinced that we cannot wait for a universal treaty," Axworthy told the delegates. "I am convinced that we can start now, even though we may have to proceed with a treaty that does not, in the first instance, include all of the states of the world. ...The challenge is to the governments assembled here to put our rhetoric into action."

The Canadian proposal got the telephone blessing of United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and praise at the conference from Cornelio Sommaruga, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and from Jody Williams, leader of the 650-member coalition of non-government organizations waging an international campaign to ban land mines.

Sommaruga declared the conference "the beginning of the end of anti-personnel land mines" and Williams told the delegates that Axworthy's challenge showed courage, leadership, vision and "true