

Statement to the Closing Plenary of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on a Treaty to Ban Anti-personnel Landmines, September 18, 1997

*by Jody Williams,
Campaign Co-ordinator,
on behalf of the
International Campaign
to Ban Landmines*

Mr. President,

As you probably surmised when the International Campaign led the standing ovation upon the adoption of the Convention yesterday, we strongly support the treaty. Indeed, we believe it is a gift to the world.

Governments have responded to the demands of the civil society, and have come together with unprecedented speed to produce a treaty that unambiguously bans all anti-personnel landmines.

We want to express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your extremely skilful and effective leadership in bringing this conference to a successful conclusion. Many said that this treaty could not be negotiated in just three weeks, but you have done it with time to spare, Mr. President, and have guided us toward a treaty of which we can all be proud.

I cannot help but think of the contrast with another set of landmine negotiations that began almost exactly two years ago in Vienna, which self-destructed after three weeks, reconvened twice more for another three weeks, and ultimately resulted in the fatally flawed CCW Landmines Protocol. We have come an incredible distance in an incredibly short time since then. We thank you, and we thank all of the governments that support this treaty.

We also want to express our appreciation to you and to the many governments that have been willing to work closely with the International Campaign over these weeks and during the past two years. This partnership is a key element of the Ottawa Process, and it is a partnership we must sustain if we are ultimately to be successful in dealing with the global landmine crisis.

The success of this Conference has validated the Ottawa Process. Together, we have shown that there can be a new way of conducting international diplomacy in the post-Cold War period. This accomplishment is

perhaps as important as the treaty itself, and should embolden us to co-operatively attack other problems on the international scene.

Mr. President, I would like to make just two comments on the provisions in the treaty. First, the International Campaign thinks it is important to stress that, in both the Working Group on Definitions and in the Committee of the Whole, delegates made it clear, for the diplomatic record, that anti-vehicle mines equipped with anti-handling devices that explode from an innocent, unintentional act are to be considered as anti-personnel mines, and therefore banned by this treaty. Second, we stress that a number of governments also indicated, for the diplomatic record, that in Article 3, the "minimum number absolutely necessary" for training mines should be hundreds or thousands, not tens of thousands or more.

Mr. President, this treaty is not perfect, as perhaps no document can be that has tried to accommodate the interests of nearly

100 governments. We will work with governments to improve it at the annual meetings and the review conference. But it is a treaty that every government of the world should sign in Ottawa in December, and ratify as rapidly as possible.

The International Campaign has drafted an action plan that I would like to present to you and the delegates, Mr. President. It lays out an agenda for concerted action, by more than 1000 non-governmental organizations in approximately 60 countries that make up the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, in getting the maximum number of signatories in December and in getting this treaty entered into force before the year 2000 — I repeat, entered into force before the year 2000 — in promoting universalization of the treaty, and in monitoring its implementation, its prohibitions, and its requirements for destruction of stockpiles and emplaced mines, and for assistance to victims.

The action plan makes it clear that we cannot treat this conference as the end game. We have produced a very

good treaty that will provide the baseline for eradicating the weapon and aiding those whose lives have forever been changed by this insidious, indiscriminate weapon. But the really hard work lies ahead. If we work together, if we not only maintain but

increase our commitment, we will be successful in the future, as we have been successful here, in truly banning anti-personnel landmines. Thank you.



All workers at orthopedic centre are landmine victims, Kabul, Afghanistan.
Photo: Robert Semeniuk