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STATEMENT OF GENEVA CALL
TO THE 1ST SESSION OF STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS
Geneva, Switzerland, 3 February 2003

Mr President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Once again we have gathered together to reinforce our fight against anti-personnel landmines and to ensure the follow-up of the commitments that have been made. We can only be delighted to see so much of the world joined here together in this aim.

This morning's discussion has focused on the theme of universalization.

There are perhaps two different interpretations of this word. There are those who think that all efforts should be made to ensure that all countries in the world sign the Ottawa Convention, and then respect and ensure respect for the Convention in their territory. And there are those who believe that we will not achieve a true universal ban, as long as all actors involved in the landmine problem, States and Non-States Actors, do not comply with the mine ban norm. Don't forget that today there are more non-State armed groups who are using mines than regular armies. Thus, Geneva Call and the ICBL Non-State Actors Working Group believe that it is our duty to also engage non-State armed groups in renouncing the use of this weapon. These two processes are not in opposition, they are indeed complementary. Only through this inclusive approach will it be possible to achieve a real mine free world.

Today, Geneva Call's 'Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action' has been signed by twenty non-State armed groups, from the Philippines, Sudan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Somalia. The Government of the Republic and Canton of Geneva is the guardian of these deeds. Certainly, the follow-up is difficult, specifically in the context of civil wars. However it is necessary to be innovative and persevering so that the mine ban is respected by everyone everywhere. But the progress that has been made so far is real. Geneva Call ensures the follow-up of signatory commitments, organises mine ban education workshops in areas under non-State armed groups control, launch local civil society networks to monitor compliance, seeks the necessary assistance to carry out stockpiles destruction, etc.

Politically, the non-State actors question is increasingly recognized as a question no longer possible to ignore in the fight against landmines. Several governments, the European Union, UN agencies support Geneva Call's efforts. The interest around today's lunch workshop organized jointly by Geneva Call and the NSA working group of ICBL is another demonstration: how often do we see countries affected with non-State actors, countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Egypt, Russia, Turkey, Armenia, Morocco, etc, agree to meet to discuss the landmine ban issue ? Yet these countries will meet together here today on the fringe of this session. This is the proof of the necessity to discuss this issue

A true collaboration among stakeholders must be achieved. Only impartial and independent NGOs can ensure that this work continues, however, governments must include this question in their political and diplomatic activities. It is for this reason that Geneva Call wanted to underline how important it is to incorporate, in all our discussions on mines, the question of non-State actors, and to envisage a specific item about this problem on the agenda of the next meeting of States Parties in Bangkok.

Thank you for your attention



Geneva Call
P.O Box 334
CH – 1211 Geneva 4
Switzerland
Tél: + 41 22 800 20 68
Fax: + 41 22 800 20 66 / 68
Email: info@genevacall.org
URL: www.genevacall.org