

February 9, 2004
Statement of Canada
Update from the Universalization Contact Group

At the Fifth Meeting of States Parties (5MSP), on behalf of the Universalization Contact Group, Canada provided an update outlining the work and discussions of the Contact Group in the year leading up to the 5MSP. Since that time, we have been pleased to welcome several new states, which have ratified or acceded to the Convention. These new ratifications/accessions are significant because they confirm continued support for the Convention and momentum in its universalization, but they are also particularly significant because each state is either mine-affected, or has stockpiles of anti-personnel (AP) mines. Thus, the official commitment by these states to the obligations of the Convention will have a real humanitarian, developmental and/or peacebuilding impact.

The Universalization Contact Group has collectively expressed the view that we must capitalize upon the momentum created by the lead-up to the Review Conference, from the perspective of universalization. We must all use this major event to ensure that as many states as possible ratify or accede to the Convention by the time of the Review Conference. As domestic processes to ratify/accede to an international treaty can often take some time, it is important that we offer as soon as possible encouragement and assistance to those who have already begun these processes, in order to ensure they are completed by the Review Conference. And, it is very important that concrete actions are taken in the near future to stimulate the initiation of such domestic ratification/domestic processes in states in which they have not yet been started. Various regional events/seminars/workshops already planned for the coming months as part of the lead-up to the Nairobi Summit represent examples of important instruments in this regard.

States not party to the Ottawa Convention should be reminded that the Nairobi Review Conference will be the most important event in the life of the Convention since the international signing conference in 1997, and is expected to generate considerable global attention. Thus, the lead-up to the Conference represents the major opportunity in the foreseeable future to potentially garner significant attention for states to make new announcements regarding ratification/accession of this important and unique humanitarian treaty.

In addition to an increase in the number of States Parties by the time of the Nairobi Conference, it is also considered a priority that other states-not-party take and communicate concrete steps toward joining the Convention. This could include the development/announcement of policies in *de facto* accordance with the Convention's obligations until the time the state in question is in a position to officially join. Finally, it will be important that we collectively are able to communicate to the international community that we have done our utmost to engage those states which remain outside the Convention, and which are considered particularly significant, for example because they hold major stockpiles of AP mines, because they are producers, or because they have recently used AP mines.

All of these topics will be discussed in greater detail at the meeting of the Universalization Contact Group later this week, including the various regional initiatives planned for the months ahead. The Contact Group will meet during the lunch break on Thursday of this week, and its format remains informal and open to all parties interested in contributing to the universalization of the Convention.