

**Universalization Contact Group
Presentation to the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the
Convention, Monday May 27 2002**

I will begin by recalling that the Universalization Contact Group is grounded in the President's Action Program of the Third Meeting of States Parties, and traditionally meets three times a year on the margins of the meetings of the Intersessional Standing Committees and the Meetings of States Parties. In keeping with this tradition, the UCG will meet on Thursday of this week. The UCG is open-ended, and open to all those who wish to make contributions to universalization efforts. Specifically, the group exists to support cooperative efforts aimed at encouraging States to ratify or accede to the Ottawa Convention.

In this regard, there has been a diversity of important and effective actions undertaken in cooperative ways. I would like to take this opportunity to both welcome and highlight just some of the universalization work done through partnerships that have taken place in the period between the last Standing Committee meetings in January and the ones in which we now sit, and which have been brought to the attention of the Coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group:

- The Democratic Republic of Congo, the first accession during this period, was the subject of actions undertaken by a number of actors, including, particularly, Belgium, Canada and the ICRC, and included significant engagement by the government of the DRC itself.
- The most recent ratification of the Convention occurred directly following a workshop in Suriname, done jointly by the Netherlands, Canada and the ICRC;
- All signals indicate that East Timor is poised to become a new accession to the Convention in the near future, and the Implementation Support Unit, the ICRC and Brazil all worked together to ensure decision makers in East Timor were briefed on the Convention in the days leading up to their Independence Day;
- And, it is important to mention the intensive actions that took place in South East Asia in this period, particularly those undertaken collaboratively by Japan, Australia, Thailand and Malaysia in the lead up to the ASEAN-focussed seminar on Landmines in Southeast Asia, and the seminar itself.

Throughout, the ICBL and its local campaigns have played a role.

In each instance, not only were a variety of committed actors involved but a diversity of tactics and types of actions were applied.

This is just a sampling of some of the actions and outcomes that have taken place in the recent past. At the Contact Group meeting we anticipate hearing others.

Looking forward now, the Co-Chairs of this Standing Committee have appropriately drawn our attention to the challenges facing us in the area of universalization. Ideas as to

the types of assistance and efforts required to meet these remaining, and often more complex, challenges are often raised in the Universalization Contact Group context, and constitute a wide range. These include, for example, suggestions for more military-to-military dialogues/engagement; customized workshops targeting the appropriate decision makers in appropriately designed ways; finding ways to insert these goals into the agendas of regional organizations; strategic funding and technical partnerships to ensure offers of appropriate assistance can be made to candidate States; demarches/approaches that are coordinated with actions undertaken by others.

The Universalization Contact Group provides a forum, then, for the sharing of knowledge and recommendations that are relevant to building informed strategies for universalization; for linking up with others whose efforts one may join, enhance or build upon; and for contributing to analysis for setting the priorities of the future. Again, on behalf of the Universalization Contact Group, I invite those wishing to undertake, report, provide information or support that is useful to efforts for universalization to join the Contact Group meeting over lunch on Thursday (please RSVP with me in advance), or, if you cannot attend that meeting, to get in touch with me through other means. The Implementation Support Unit can be of assistance in this regard. The information sharing and linkages to be made could be most valuable in achieving the universalization goals we have set for the Convention.