

Statement of Canada
Standing Committee on General Status and Operation
8th May, 2006

Update from the Coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group

Thank you Co-Chairs,

It is Canada's pleasure to report that four states ratified the Convention since the end of the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties in December, 2005.

- Ukraine, a country with considerable stockpiled mines, was welcomed into the Convention on 27 December, 2005;
- Despite its challenging circumstances, **Haiti** made the Ottawa Convention a priority by ratifying on 15 February;
- One month later on 15 March, the **Cook Islands** deposited its instrument of ratification;
- And **Brunei Darussalam** followed suit on 24 April, becoming the one-hundred fifty-first State to adhere to the Ottawa Convention.

Canada congratulates these four countries on their ratification. Of the 122 countries who signed the Convention in 1997, only three remain that have not yet ratified it: Indonesia, the Marshall Islands and Poland. It is our hope that these signatories can soon be welcomed as States Parties to the Convention

The European Union's commitment of support for the destruction of Ukraine's stockpiles mines was critical in facilitating its entry into the Convention. We encourage the EU to place similar emphasis on bringing into the Convention Finland and Poland, its only two member-states that have not yet joined. States Parties from the region are urged to take advantage of all bilateral and multilateral opportunities to urge these two states to ratify or accede to the Convention, to bring Europe to full universalization.

In 2005, **China** and **Mongolia** were identified as non-party States that had expressed an interest in submitting voluntary Article 7 transparency reports. To

date, neither has indicated a firm timeline for the submission of reports. In June 2005, **Sri Lanka** had submitted a report that did not include information regarding stockpiled mines, and has been encouraged to resubmit the completed report. States not party are encouraged to submit a completed voluntary Article 7 transparency report as a step towards membership to the Convention, but this measure should be taken with the intent of moving more rapidly toward accession or ratification.

Since December 2005, there have been several activities to promote adherence to the Convention. We have just heard that the President of the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties has written letters to all the States that remain outside the Convention, encouraging them to ratify or accede to it as soon as possible. We commend Croatia on taking leadership in this regard. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines held youth workshops in Egypt and Lebanon which were well-attended by civil society, government officials, and the diplomatic community. Canada undertook missions to India and Pakistan in March, providing a valuable opportunity to engage their governments. Visits to Brunei by the ICBL, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Implementation Support Unit proved critical in bringing this signatory on board. The States Parties are encouraged to follow-up on these activities where an opportunity exists.

At one hundred fifty one member-states, we have come a long way in universalizing the Convention. However, many of the holdout states are significant cases. Among them are: ten countries that have used mines since the Ottawa Convention entered into force in 1999; at least fourteen countries that maintain their ability to produce mines; and nine countries that are thought to have stockpiles in excess of 1 million mines, according to the Landmine Monitor report. This is in addition to the continued use of mines by a large number of non-state actors, highlighting the need to ensure universal adherence to the norms of the Convention.

If there is any doubt that universalization needs to remain a priority, let us be reminded of the words we all endorsed in the Nairobi Action Plan: “the only guarantee that the significant disarmament and humanitarian advances to date will endure, and that a world free of anti-personnel mines will be ultimately realised, will lie in the achievement of universal adherence to the Convention and implementation of its comprehensive ban.” The tremendous effort required to clear all mined areas and assist survivors must be undertaken alongside efforts to promote universalization of the Convention and its norms. Only then can we ensure that mines will never again be laid and claim new victims in that same earth.

We note that a number of States Parties underlined the importance of universalization, during statements at the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties. These positive words are appreciated, and it is our sincere hope that these promising words are being supported by concrete action. More effort by a larger number of States Parties could take us much further in promoting universalization than a great effort by few States. The impetus to pursue a universal ban needs to rise from and be championed by States Parties and multilateral organizations in regions where the rate of adherence remains low. This cannot be the effort of a handful of states – it must be the collective effort of all States Parties working together in mutual support of one another. Canada would be pleased to discuss with individual States Parties ways to coordinate our efforts to engage States outside the Convention.

Finally, the Universalization Contact Group will meet this Thursday at one o'clock in the Attique level Restaurant on the top floor of this building. All are welcome and encouraged to participate.

Thank you.