

**4MSP Closing Press Conference
Geneva, 20 September 2002**

Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium, 4MSP President, held a joint closing press conference with Stephen Goose, Head of the ICBL Delegation, and Apirat Sugondhabirom of Thailand.

Ambassador Lint began by saying with the participation of 131 States, the most to attend an annual MSP to date, with over 700 participants, the 4MSP was already a success. With the addition of two new ratifications / accessions this week, the Comores and Cameroun, and with the accession of Afghanistan last week, we now stand at 128 States Parties to the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines, and On Their Destruction*. There are an additional 17 Signatory States and 49 States not Party to the Convention. The 4MSP stressed the importance of **universalizing** the Convention.

Emphasis throughout the week was on the core humanitarian obligations and the deadlines outlined in the Convention, particularly the **4 year deadline to destroy stockpiles**, which is approaching for 45 States in 2003, and the **ten year deadline for clearance of mined areas** beginning in 2009. There is no deadline for provision of **victim assistance**, as landmine survivors will need assistance for their lifetimes. There was an emphasis during the 4MSP on the need to mobilize resources in order for States Parties to be able to meet these obligatory deadlines in the Convention.

The **4MSP Final Declaration** included a call to Non-State Actors to respect the Convention and it was a stronger call than was contained in the Managua Declaration in 2001. The States welcomed the offer of **Thailand to host the 5MSP**. Finally, the importance of the **2004 Review Conference** was highlighted and a decision taken to begin consultations to establish a preparatory process for the Review Conference.

Stephen Goose, Head of the ICBL Delegation at the 4MSP, started by saying this was evidence of the collaborative process between States Parties and the ICBL, because Ambassador Lint had just said what ICBL would say! Mr. Goose stressed the critical importance of the partnership between governments and civil society, which has been the hallmark of the “Ottawa Process” and the continued key to its success. He said that overall the 4MSP had been a very good week and really shown that the world is embracing a comprehensive ban on antipersonnel mines (APMs).

Regarding **universalization**, it was very important that the Comores and Cameroun had now joined the Convention and extremely important that both Afghanistan and Angola have recently joined the Convention, as they are two of the most mine-affected countries in the world. The process leading up to the annual Meetings of States Parties often results in more countries joining the Convention. Of particular importance is the fact that Afghanistan, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo are countries that have recently used APMs and are now no longer using them. This again shows the power of the mine ban movement. There are an increasing number of States Parties and even States not Party to the Convention which are respecting the obligations not to use, produce or transfer APMs. Several countries conferred they would soon be joining the Convention, including Turkey and Greece, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. In the case of Belarus, they stated they would join when they feel comfortable that they would receive adequate funding for stockpile destruction.

There was a good deal of discussion during the 4MSP about the funding issue, following the **Landmine Monitor Report 2002** finding that global funding for mine action had stagnated between 2000-2001, rather than increasing significantly as it has each year. This was met

with a concrete response from the 4MSP, with the establishment of a **Resource Mobilization Contact Group**, proposed by Norway. This was a very encouraging development.

There was a strong focus during the 4MSP on the stockpile destruction (4 years) and mine clearance (10 years) deadlines contained in the Convention, with the importance of meeting these deadlines being emphasized. Another concrete response during the 4MSP was the establishment of a **Stockpile Destruction Contact Group**. The ICBL is particularly concerned about **Djibouti**, whose deadline is approaching quickly on 1 March 2003, as they have not reported on their stockpiles given that they have not filed the obligatory Article 7 report. There is also a concern about **Turkmenistan**, which also has a 1 March 2003 deadline. Turkmenistan reported a stockpile of 700,000 mines in October 2001 and had asked for a 7-year extension to destroy their mines. When informed that there is no provision in the Convention for an extension on stockpile destruction deadlines, Turkmenistan then said they would meet the deadline.

Regarding the **10-year deadline for clearance of mined areas**, there was a renewed sense of urgency which emerged during the 4MSP, as at the present pace of clearance, several countries may not be able to meet this deadline. There is, however, provision in the Convention for a ten-year extension on mine clearance, though States must make clear that they have done their utmost to meet the deadline and give clear reasons on why this is not possible. *The importance of assistance for mine clearance, mine risk education, stockpile destruction and victim assistance were all stressed throughout the 4MSP.*

Regarding **Non-State Actors (NSAs)**, the ICBL and the Geneva Call held a briefing for 4MSP delegates, with NSA representatives from Iraq and Sudan on the panel. This helped to spur new language in the Final Declaration urging NSAs to cease using APMs and to respect the terms of the Convention, even though they are not Party.

The presence of **landmine survivors from Africa** at the 4MSP through the “**Raising the Voices**” programme had a powerful impact, as always. As Mr. Goose said, “That is what our work is all about.”

The ICBL is very pleased that **Thailand** has accepted to host the **5MSP**. It is an important tradition to rotate the annual Meetings of States Parties between Geneva and a mine-affected country. The FMSP was held in Mozambique and the 3MSP was held in Nicaragua.

In closing, Mr. Goose stated that the 4MSP had issued a strong **Final Declaration**, as well as a **President’s Action Programme**, which set the stage for continued progress on fully implementing the Convention. “**This demonstrates a reaffirmation of political will to move us closer to our goal of a MineFree World.**”

Mr. Apirat Sugondhabhirom of Thailand stated that Thailand is honored to have been chosen to host the **5MSP**. Thailand is well aware of the devastation caused by antipersonnel mines and the needs of landmine victims, as they have many in their own country and region. Thailand hopes to raise awareness about the mines problem in the Asia-Pacific region during the lead-up to the 5MSP, thereby enhancing universalization efforts in the region. Even though Thailand, as a tourist destination, is well known for its smiles, succulent food and scenic beauty, Thailand realized this is a very serious business and will make every effort to make the 5MSP a success next year.

Questions from the Media:

Q: Regarding the lack of funding, could you elaborate on that and explain what that means in terms of mine clearance, stockpile destruction and what is needed?

A: Amb. Lint: There are 69 countries (45 in 2003 and 24 in 2004) which need to destroy their APM stockpiles of approximately 1.5 million APMs before the 2004 Review Conference. There is not really a lack of funding for mine clearance, but rather more resources are needed because of the 2009 deadline for mine clearance.

Goose: It is not possible to put a dollar figure on what the global needs are because we do not have a clear picture of the scope of the problem. The Landmine Impact Surveys are beginning to give us a better picture. During 2001, there was a total of 237 million US dollars pledged for mine action. Previously there had been a desire to raise one billion dollars per year as the target, so it is obvious more funds are needed. It is important to note that mine action and victim assistance are long-term commitments and there is a need to increase the current levels of support.

Q: Do you have a message you want to send to the Security Council members who cannot bring themselves to put pen to paper on the Convention?

A: Goose: "I'll be happy to answer that one! Our message to all governments has always been '**Ban Them Now!**'" We consider any use of antipersonnel mines to be illegal under existing International Humanitarian Law, independent of the Mine Ban Convention. All States are obligated not to use APMs and those who have expressed they are in favor of joining the Convention should do so immediately. It is sometimes overstated about the importance of the United States, Russia and China joining the Convention. Of course, we want them to join and eventually they will. But it is more important to have Angola and Afghanistan join because those are countries where antipersonnel mines have been used the most and where they have the most landmine victims.

Amb Lint: The States Parties at the 4MSP called strongly on the 14 remaining producers of antipersonnel mines and on those who use and/or stockpile antipersonnel mines to stop. Increased efforts will be made on bilateral and regional levels to encourage this.

Q: Are you in touch with the producers?

A: Goose: There was a campaign in the US to stigmatize producers and we succeeded in convincing many of them to no longer produce APMs or component parts. However, given that most APM producers are state-owned enterprises, the approaches need to be made directly to the governments concerned and not to the manufacturers.

End.