



**STATEMENT OF GENEVA CALL
TO THE FOURTH MEETING OF STATE PARTIES
TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION**

Geneva, Switzerland, 18 September 2002

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentleman,

Great effort has been made by this body to universalise the Mine Ban Treaty and to eradicate the scourge of landmines throughout the world. However, despite important progress, there still remains much work to be done before we can claim that a truly universal ban has been achieved. Besides the abstention of reluctant States, not the least of these being China, the Federation of Russia and the United States, one area that needs attention is the question of non-State actors (NSAs) - i.e. armed groups operating outside of government control.

NSAs also manufacture, stockpile and use landmines. According to recent research, 40 armed groups are reported to have used this weapon in the period of 2001-2002, in Angola, Burma, Colombia, Nepal and Russia/Chechnya to give just a few examples.

Moreover, many people live on mined land under non-state control, like in southern Sudan and northern Iraq. The people living in these affected areas face a serious landmine problem and often find themselves without proper assistance. From data compiled from the Landmine Monitor Report 2001, Geneva Call estimates that one third of known new mine victims are from internal conflicts that involved armed groups.

The NSA reality has also had an adverse impact on States' mine policy. Data indicate that the greatest proportion of NSA use of landmines occur in non-signatory countries. In several cases, governments have cited the activity of non-State armed groups within their territory as reasons for not acceding to the Mine Ban Treaty or for not carrying out their obligations as a State Party. Other governments justify their abstention due to the existence of landmines in areas under NSA control, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to fulfill their obligations under the Ottawa Convention. Vice-versa, several NSAs have cited State refusal to accede to the Ottawa Convention as a reason for their unwillingness to declare a unilateral mine ban.

Engaging NSAs in a complementary process is therefore essential to achieve a true universal ban on antipersonnel mines. An inter-State ban alone is insufficient to solve the landmine problem. Because NSAs are part of the problem, they therefore must be part of the solution.

Acknowledging this reality, Geneva Call and members of the ICBL Non-State Actors Working Group have been working to secure a ban among NSAs and obtain their cooperation on integrated mine action. To date, five NSAs have signed the "Deed of Commitment Under Geneva Call for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action": the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) of the Philippines, and last month, the two PUK and KDP-led Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Governments. Others have unilaterally stopped using landmines and support mine clearance and victim assistance programs in areas under their control. Bilateral agreements with States with clear references to mines have also been made by NSAs in some countries.

The NSA involvement in the landmine problem and the progress made in engaging them has been increasingly highlighted on the international agenda. In September 2001, the European Parliament voted unanimously a resolution calling on the international community to support efforts made to obtain commitments to an anti-personnel mine ban from NSAs. The importance of engaging NSAs in a mine ban was likewise acknowledged in the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Treaty gathered few weeks later in Managua, Nicaragua. For the very first time, the State Parties recognized that "progress to free the world from anti-personnel mines would be promoted by the commitment by NSAs to cease and renounce their use in line with the international norm established by this Convention." (paragraph 12). I take this opportunity to thank the Italian and Swiss governments for their support to Geneva Call. However, even with these positive developments, recent experiences and attempts at field engagement by humanitarian workers and landmine campaigners have encountered a number of obstacles.

At this Fourth Meeting of States Parties, Geneva Call would like to call upon them

- to follow through the Managua declaration by supporting efforts made by international and national humanitarian organizations in achieving a ban among NSAs;
- to provide or enable conditions to such humanitarian organizations to safely and expeditiously engage the non-State actors in their respective countries on a landmines ban;
- to support humanitarian organizations assisting NSAs in implementing their mine ban commitments;
- to support humanitarian mine action in NSAs areas; and
- to devote greater attention to the NSA question in preparation of the 2004 Review Conference.

Thank you

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