

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Italy
H.E. Amb. Mario E. Maiolini
to the Fourth Conference of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention
(Geneva, 16-20 September 2002)
(Victim assistance)

Mister President,

Italy's consistent engagement towards the fulfilling of the Ottawa Convention's goal is further demonstrated by the net increase of funds allocated in 2002 to humanitarian de-mining and victim assistance activities, if compared to what had been financed in 2001. While last year the budget for such operations allocated by the Italian Fund for mine action had been of roughly 2,6 million Euros, the global amount available for 2002 - to be finalised next week - will reach 9,8 million Euros. Approximately four times higher than twelve months ago.

Those figures clearly indicate that Italy recognises that our main priority must remain actual and timely help to those unfortunate countries whose territory is still marked by widespread mined areas. Their very presence seriously hampers any possibility of sustainable economic and social development, while it keeps exacting a high and unacceptable toll in human lives. Continuity in the mine action funding stands a key concept of Italy's policy on the matter.

In selecting countries and projects, we tried to focus on those areas that are more seriously affected by landmines, keeping in mind the need to maximise efficiency by assuring continuity over the years to the financed programs.

Italy will therefore support humanitarian de-mining, victim assistance and mine awareness operations in Afghanistan, in the Balkans (Bosnia and Croatia), in the Horn of Africa, and in those Sub-Saharan and Middle East Countries (Angola, Mozambique, Yemen) which more than others have received a dreadful legacy of landmines. A degree of priority will also be given to mine action programs carried on by regional organisations, such as the Organisation of American States (two hundred fifty thousand Euros).

The pertinent funds have channelled mostly via UNDP, UNMAS and UNICEF.

Finally, a special attention will be granted to projects aimed at promoting the correct implementation and universalization of the Ottawa Convention. We expect that next week Italy will formally decide its financial support to the ICBL (two hundred twenty thousand Euros), to the GICHD (one hundred thousand Euros for projects + forty-seven thousand Euros for ISU + sixty-five thousand Euros for Sponsorship Programs) and to the NGO "Geneva Call" (one hundred thousand Euros for projects to involve non State actors in Africa and America).

Thank you Mister President.