

CANADA

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Notes for a Statement by

HIS EXCELLENCY ROSS HYNES

AMBASSADOR FOR MINE ACTION

FIFTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES

**TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE,
STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-
PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION (THE OTTAWA
CONVENTION)**

Bangkok, Thailand

September 15, 2003

Time necessitates that this statement be brief, but the circumstances demand that I begin by acknowledging a number of special contributions, and sacrifices.

Let me start, your Excellency, by thanking Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana, the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, you and all of your colleagues and fellow citizens for the tireless efforts and gracious hospitality you have marshalled in welcoming this meeting to Bangkok and to this beautiful country. Thanks, too, to your colleagues on the Coordinating Committee, the Implementation Support Unit and the UN Secretariat for the excellent arrangements that have been put in place.

I want, secondly, to pay official tribute to the Government of Belgium and our outgoing President, Ambassador Jean Lint, and to express the heartfelt personal appreciation of all Canadian friends and colleagues, for the dedication and leadership Jean Lint has shown throughout his association with the Ottawa Convention. Jean says he is moving on to different challenges but we know that his attachment to this cause will not diminish; and he must know that we will continue to seek his wise counsel no matter what his official capacity may be.

On a more sombre note, tribute has already been paid, but I cannot let this occasion pass without recalling the distress with which we in Canada learned of the loss of several UN and humanitarian workers in two separate incidents over the past month in Iraq. We knew and admired many of the victims, including some who survived to our great relief and are in our midst today. The example set by all of these friends and colleagues should constantly remind us of the unbounded selflessness of which people are capable in serving the interests of their fellow human beings. And it should spur us all to dig deeper and do better whenever we might be given the opportunity to make a difference for the better.

Finally, Canada joins with you in congratulating and welcoming the representatives of the Convention's new members this year: Belarus, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Cyprus, Gambia, Guyana, Lithuania, Sao Tome and Principe, and Timor Leste. The adherence of seventy per cent of the world's states to such a young convention underscores the justice of the cause that brings us together this week.

In recent days, many international headlines have been generated by the release of the 2003 edition of the ICBL's Landmine Monitor. This year's Monitor reinforces a popular verdict, and we believe it an accurate one -- that the Ottawa Process and Convention, and the humanitarian endeavours they have inspired represent one of the great international success stories of recent times. At the same time, the Monitor demonstrates, in clinical detail, a tragic reality: the job is not done.

Yes, the numbers of states using and producing AP mines continue to decrease, the trade seems essentially dead, and stockpiles are being progressively eliminated in the thousands, even millions. Yes, more resources are being deployed to clear more valuable land and assist victims in more countries, and casualty rates continue an overall downward trend.

But, with some 200 million mines still stockpiled in 78 countries, with development and normal life paralyzed in countless communities because of mines still in the ground in over 80 countries,

and with some 15 to 20 thousand people in 65 countries still falling victim to these indiscriminate weapons every year, clearly the job is not done. And clearly, from the perspective of those communities and those victims, we have yet to arrest the humanitarian crisis that galvanised the success story of this convention in the first place.

In such circumstances, it is no easy task to follow Belgium and Jean Lint in leading our work under this convention; but Thailand, and you and your government Mr. Minister, are ideally placed to assume that important role. The field visit, so ably organized by TMAC (the Thailand Mine Action Centre) in Sa Kaew Province yesterday, provided valuable insight into the challenges Thailand faces as a mine-affected country. But the achievements to date -- in clearing mined land, in destroying all of your stockpiles -- testify also to your commitment to addressing this humanitarian imperative and offer an example worthy of emulation well beyond your borders.

Canada certainly shares the hope of many that Thailand's example and its leadership in this process will spur broader attention, and adherence, to the Convention at the regional level. For we cannot neglect the reality that the Asian region presents particular challenges for our work here this week. As the latest Land Mine Monitor notes, 23 of forty states from Asia-Pacific have yet to formally join the Convention, nine of fifteen mine producing countries are in Asia, and Asian states figure prominently in the six countries documented to have used mines in the period under review -- India, Iraq, Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, and Russia. Our gathering here in Bangkok presents an important opportunity to consider ways of better engaging these, and indeed all non states parties and other actors, in constructive dialogue on the universalization of the Convention and its norms. The meeting this morning of the Universalization Contact Group provided an excellent start to those deliberations.

On a more global level, we will also be looking to Thailand's leadership this week in securing the adoption of a Declaration and a Presidential Plan of Action to guide our actions in promoting and implementing the Convention over the coming months. Canada viewed our previous President's Action Plan as an excellent framework for its efforts in this regard over the past year.

In terms of the Convention's humanitarian goals, Canada's activities over the past year have included continued support for more than 100 different projects, such as impact surveys, demining, mine risk education, and victim assistance programmes in all regions of the world -- and all with an emphasis on the fullest possible engagement and involvement of affected communities and individuals and the development of local capacity to sustain this crucial humanitarian work. In the same spirit, we have joined hands with the GICHD in seeking to improve the means for bringing appropriate technology to bear on the real mine action requirements in the field. And of course, we have continued also to place special emphasis on stockpile destruction, supporting planning and destruction projects, and we encourage all other States Parties to join us in this endeavour.

In seeking to promote broader understanding and acceptance of the Convention's norms, we have continued to find regional and national-level workshops a useful vehicle, supporting or organizing events in various regions. And, as reported at our last inter-sessional meetings in Geneva, we have tried to take focussed steps to involve key constituencies in dialogue on

universalization. Canada's delegation this week thus again includes our former Defence Chief, General Maurice Baril, who will be discussing our initiatives to engage senior military officers in our work, and Canadian Member of Parliament, Paddy Torsney, is also here to discuss the role of Parliamentarians, including in preparations for next year's Review Conference. In a similar vein, we expect this week, in concert with Mines Action Canada and our Youth Mine Action Ambassadors Programme, to discuss concrete ways of involving youth from all regions in preparations for the Review Conference, and in the Conference itself.

In these and other ways, Canada will continue seeking to meet its obligations to support the promotion and implementation of the Convention. This commitment was affirmed in concrete terms last winter with the Prime Minister's decision to renew the Canadian Landmine Fund for the five-year period beginning in 2003. Resources – and lots of them – will clearly be needed if we are ever to fully meet the objectives of this treaty.

But there is another essential ingredient, and this is well understood and exemplified in this forum. That is the spirit of shared responsibility and genuine partnership that has characterized the campaign against landmines since its inception. One cannot begin to name all the governments, NGOs and individuals who have contributed to this common effort. But I do want to express Canada's appreciation to those with whom we have worked over the past year in every region. And I want to thank those international organizations, including the ICBL, the ICRC, GICHD, concerned UN agencies, the OAS and the OSCE, which have demonstrated such leadership in this cause.

Future progress will clearly require that we sustain and strengthen these partnerships. And, as we have discussed in inter-sessionals over the past year, it will require also that we forge new and different partnerships – that we reach out and engage international cooperation and national development ministries, private sector institutions and multilateral financial and development organizations. Canada looks forward to some action-oriented, discussions on this particular challenge in the days ahead, including in the Resource Mobilization Group led by Norway.

This general phase of our debate will touch on a number of issues and ideas that will benefit from more detailed discussion in the days and weeks ahead. Based on the past performance of this convention, we are confident those discussions will clarify the issues and generate effective action on the many of the ideas.

This year, however, we face an additional and increasingly immediate challenge. That will be to pull the strands of our various interests and initiatives into a coherent framework and a comprehensive action plan for next year's first Review Conference for the Ottawa Convention. To this end, we will be taking some important organizational decisions this week, and it will be essential that we then hit the ground running with just 14 short months left to prepare the event.

The Review Conference will provide a major opportunity to remind the world of the unique success story this convention represents. But immeasurably more important, it will present a crucial test of our staying power and our commitment to finish the job we have begun. For only when that is done, will history ultimately agree that we have achieved true success. In closing, I want simply to pledge Canada's full and active cooperation with all who share goal of seeing that verdict through.