



## Statement by Geneva Call

to the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty  
delivered by Elisabeth Reusse-Decrey, President

17 September 2003

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

Several years ago, we began discussing the question of how to engage armed non-state actors in the mine ban. Three years ago we launched Geneva Call in order to “operationalise” these discussions. Faced with this new concept, many were uncomfortable.

Today, we are almost all in agreement that the issue of non-state actors cannot be ignored, side-stepped or avoided. We, all of us, recognise there will not be full universalisation of the mine ban norm without the engagement of NSAs. To have a ban on antipersonnel landmines -- one that is in practice in all battle fields, one that is more than just a theory in the Capitals -- we must work to make it relevant to everybody.

We must keep in mind that today more NSAs are using mines than regular forces. We must remember that today some governments are reluctant to sign the Mine Ban Treaty because armed groups are using mines in their territory. Let us not forget that today the people living in areas under the control of NSAs do not receive adequate support.

Geneva Call does not view the Convention as flawed and in need of amendment in order to include NSAs. It is a state mechanism. We are however certain, that we must engage non-state actors. We are aware that this is sensitive work and quite politically charged. Regardless, the engagement of NSAs in the AP mine ban norm is driven, like the Convention itself, by humanitarian imperatives.

The work done by Geneva Call and some national campaigns of the ICBL is complementary to the work done by others to bring all states onside with the Convention.

Geneva Call would like to request the States Parties to strengthen the language on non-state actors in the final declaration here in Bangkok. This is the *fifth* Meeting of States Parties. We are past the point of merely saying this is an important issue and calling upon NSAs to make a commitment. The words will need to be stronger to make change.

The issue of NSAs merits serious consideration. It deserves more attention than what can be achieved in workshops on the sidelines of meetings. This question of ‘*what does it mean to engage NSAs in the mine ban norm*’ must be placed squarely on the table, alongside other important questions such as victim assistance, mine risk education and clearance. Geneva Call asks that space be made for this discussion within the intersessional meetings.

It is important that governments here raise the profile of NSA engagements in the mine ban norm in other international fora. The achievements and the lessons learned here are as far reaching as they are unique. Our collective experience is valuable to others working to promote humanitarian norms.

Discussion alone is not enough. Geneva Call, and other NGOs working in this area have to be supported, and not only financially, but also in facilitating missions in the field and allowing access to certain regions.

Already some governments are supportive -- Switzerland, Italy, the UK, Canada, Colombia, the Philippines, the European Commission, UNMAS and the GICHD. Geneva Call is grateful for this support.

Ladies and Gentleman, honourable members, States Party to this enormous accomplishment – the Mine Ban Treaty:

To engage NSAs, to support NGOs working in this field, does not mean supporting NSAs themselves or the causes they espouse. Geneva Call has shown this is possible. Together, if we refuse to accept the conditions of these wars we can “bring back” the peace. Safe living conditions for people are a prerequisite for peace.

It is time for States to consider that mines have nothing to do with politics. The effort to engage NSAs in humanitarian norms such as the mine ban have no agenda other than to alleviate the suffering of those living in places of war.

Thank you for your attention.