

ICBL Closing Statement

By Sister Denise Coghlan, Cambodian Campaign to Ban Landmines

5th Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty, Siem Reap, Cambodia 25-29 November 2024

Dear Friends of the Mine Ban Treaty,

Thank you and congratulations to President H.E Ly Thuch and his wonderful CMAA team for the charm and good humour and competence you have displayed in making this summit such a glorious success.

As a member of ICBL, I bring greetings from Jody Williams, and Steve Goose who were not able to be here today but follow this Treaty as eagerly as they did in 1994.

Excellencies,

Thirty years ago, in Cambodia four ex-soldiers, who had two legs between the four of them wrote a letter saying:

Before we were soldiers of four different factions in Cambodia. We laid the mines that blew off the legs and arms and eyes of others.

We beg the world to:

- *stop making mines, stop laying mines*
- *stop selling, transferring, stockpiling mines.*

We beg the world to clear the mines, so that all those injured and the affected communities may live in dignity and peace.

Our revered King Norodom Sihanouk and our former Prime Minister Samdach Hun Sen supported the letter. We were able to take 1 million signatures to Vienna in 1995. This was the first time survivor voices were heard at the UN as they stood and sat at the UN podium.

What a beautiful gesture of reconciliation that was!

Today, even more the world cries out for peace and Reconciliation.

Many Cambodians have the souls of artists or poets. So, scattered through history and throughout the country are SYMBOLS, the most famous being Angkor Wat.

Last Sunday night we dined together at the magnificent Bayon Temple. The moonlight bathed the four faces of the Prom as they smiled down on us, blessing us for the week ahead and chasing away all that would do evil or harm.

There are many different interpretations given to these four faces.

Some say they call to those entrusted with government to make sure you gaze in all directions the East, the West, the North, the South to include all your people, especially, the poorest, the most vulnerable, the most injured in your care.

Then your mind will be opened, your heart converted, because the need of the other will evoke compassion in YOU.

Other think the four faces stand for the four virtues of Cambodia.

METTA – Mercy

KARUNA – Loving Kindness

UPIKA – Equanimity or Peacefulness

MUDITA – Rejoicing in Another's Good – opposite of Jealousy

All are necessary if we want to implement the Spirit of our Mine Ban Convention.

So, this Review Conference, this summit for a mine free world calls all governments and civil society to protect this Treaty and to implement its action plan.

Thus, we will ban use, production, transfer and stockpiling of all anti-personnel landmines.

We will not tolerate any actions that diminish the integrity of the treaty

We will with renewed energy clear all mined areas so that no new victims will be killed or injured, so our children can play freely in the fields, so that our earth will produce crops again.

Our environment will be released from the scourge of deadly weapons forever.

We will listen to the voice of survivors as action is planned to uphold their rights and meet their needs for a life of dignity.

We will support peer survivor groups as they accompany, serve and advocate for their sisters and brothers injured by mines.

We thank you to all donors of Mine Action everywhere. You are so generous.

We specially encourage the setting up of the Trust Fund to complete clearance in countries that could finish the job quickly with just a little funding. Of course we also need funding to complete the clearance in highly contaminated countries.

Thank you all for your efforts and for your capacity to dialogue constructively so that A WORLD WITHOUT MINES BECOMES A REALITY. Remember No Exceptions.

Let us leave here with memories of the smiles of Cambodia, blessing us to ban all landmines in our hearts and rid our world of all landmines in the earth.

Thank you and remember

“NO EXCUSES, NO EXCEPTIONS, NO DELAYS!”

PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF OUR TREATY.

LET'S MARCH FORWARD!