



The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention at 20 years; road to the 16MSP in Vienna

On 1 December 2017, the Permanent Missions of Austria and Canada, along with the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit, invite State and civil society representatives to commemorate the opening for signature of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Ottawa 20 years ago, in the lead-up to the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties (16MSP) to take place in Vienna from 18-21 December 2017.

In 1992, civil society launched an international campaign to end human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines. Following years of growing momentum, in recognition of the impact of mines, in 1996, Canada invited interested States and civil society to attend the Ottawa Conference to discuss the banning of anti-personnel mines with the meeting culminating in the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Lloyd Axworthy, challenging States to return to Ottawa in one year to adopt a treaty prohibiting anti-personnel mines. Austria played a critical role in the process having developed the first draft of a treaty banning anti-personnel mines and taking a lead on subsequent drafts.

In the short space of one year a number of regional efforts and multilateral meetings followed, including in Vienna, Bonn, Brussels, and subsequent adoption in Oslo, to finally return to Ottawa on the 3rd and 4th of December 1997, where 122 States signed the treaty. That year, for their determination and achievement, Jody Williams and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines received the Nobel Peace Prize. This partnership effort between civil society and States was and remains a hallmark of the Convention and a practice which has been replicated in other efforts to conclude disarmament treaties.

Since 1997, more than 80% of the world's States have undertaken to fulfil the ambition of a mine-free world as set forth by the Convention, and ending the suffering and casualties caused by these weapons, for all people for all time. In partnership, States Parties and civil society have worked together in many mine-affected States to support mine clearance, assist mine survivors and their communities, educate civilians about the risks of mines, and destroy existing stockpiles. This hard work has brought about great success with hundreds of square kilometres of previously contaminated land returned to safe and productive use, 51 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines having been destroyed, and a significant reduction in the number of victims.

In 2014, States Parties met in Maputo and renewed their commitment to a mine free world, agreeing to a goal of 2025 as a target date to fulfill the Convention's requirements. However, some States are still faced with vast areas of contaminated land placing communities at risk and impeding development. Countries emerging from conflict are grappling with contamination among a host of other challenges as they work to rebuild their societies. Furthermore, new conflicts in some parts of the world have resulted in a surge of new use of anti-personnel mines by some States and by armed non-state actors.

Our meeting will take place in this context, both to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the conclusion of the Ottawa Process, and to glimpse ahead to the 16MSP in Vienna where we will build on two decades of partnerships in mine action in pursuit of our goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines.

Programme

Friday, 1 December

12:00 – 12:30 – Official opening

- H.E. Rosemary McCarney, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations in Geneva
- H.E. Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria and President of the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties
- H.E. Peter Sørensen, Ambassador of the European Union to the United Nations in Geneva

12:30 – 13:55– *The Convention: what was then, what now, what next?*

This moderated conversation will be facilitated by H.E. Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria and President of the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties.

The following panellists, many of whom were part of that process that led up to the realisation of the Convention, will reflect upon what was then, as well as on what is now and what comes next for the Convention.

- Cornelio Sommaruga, former President of the International Committee of the Red Cross
- Tammy Hall, Head, Strategies and Standards, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
- Samer Bedrud, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva
- Facundo Chavez Penillas, Human Rights and Disability Advisor, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Amélie Chayer, Acting Director, International Campaign to Ban Landmines
- Chris Loughran, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Mines Advisory Group

13:55 – 14:00 – Closing Remarks will be offered by H.E. Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria and President of the Sixteenth Meeting of the States Parties