

PRESS RELEASE - Far away from a "mine free world" - The 6th meeting of states parties of the Ottawa Convention faces big challenges

More than 40 non-governmental organisations from 8 countries call for the full implementation of the Ottawa Treaty - Half of the top 20 donors provided less mine action funding in 2004 - Estimated 15,000-20,000 new casualties each year ' Coalition agreement of the new German government remains a "mine free area"

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Berlin (25 November 2005) ' On Monday, the 28th of November, the 6th Meeting of States Parties of the Ottawa Convention opens in Zagreb. In a joint statement (full text available at: www.landmine.de) more than 40 non-governmental organisations from 4 continents call for the full implementation of the Ottawa Treaty.

"The loopholes of the treaty have to be closed immediately", says Thomas Küchenmeister from Actiongroup Landmine.de. "Again the conference report (Zagreb Progress Report) does not provide answers to open questions, especially which mines are banned and how many mines a state party may retain for training purposes", Küchenmeister underlines.

Meanwhile nearly 20 Ottawa member states support the view that any mine (including anti-vehicle mines), despite its label or design intent, capable of being detonated by a person is an antipersonnel mine and is prohibited. Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom are the only States Parties that have publicly stated the view that the Ottawa Convention does not apply to anti-vehicle mines at all.

Although Germany has announced to reduce its stockpiles of anti-vehicle mines equipped with sensitive fuses or anti-handling devices, it still refuses to destroy all landmines that can be detonated by a person. Moreover Germany plans to "modernize" its landmines and cluster weapons. "We urge the new government to change Germany's landmine policy", Küchenmeister says. "We are very concerned that Germany will lose its credibility, because the coalition agreement of the new German government is a "mine-free area". Unfortunately, it does not contain any commitments neither in respect of the full implementation of the Ottawa Treaty, the further improvement of the ban on landmines and cluster weapons nor the support of mine action programmes."

In the joint statement the non-governmental organisations point out, that all landmines injure and kill indiscriminately and inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced people. Landmines obstruct economic development and reconstruction and thus impede the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. "It is foreseeable, that many state parties will not meet their obligation in respect of clearing their mine fields and destroying their landmine stockpiles," worries Thomas Gebauer from medico international. "This especially refers to countries like Angola, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia and Mozambique."

The Landmine Monitor 2005, published by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), assesses that half of the top 20 donors provided less mine action funding in 2004: Australia, Canada, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom. "This trend has to be stopped in Zagreb and it must be ensured that sufficient financial support will be provided according to the article 6 of the Convention," claims Thomas Gebauer, co-founder of the ICBL.

The Landmine Monitor 2005 estimates that there are still 15,000-20,000 new casualties to mourn each year and estimates that as of 2005 more than 200,000 km² of the world's landmass is suspected to be contaminated.

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