

Landmine Monitor 2004 Press Release

New Report Looks at 5-Year Trends

Since the international treaty prohibiting antipersonnel landmines took effect five years ago, use of the weapon around the world has fallen dramatically, global funding for mine action programs has increased more than 80 percent, more than 1,100 square kilometers of land has been cleared, and the number of new mine victims each year has decreased markedly, according to a 1,300-page report by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) released today.

“The international norm established by the Mine Ban Treaty is rapidly taking firm hold around the world, especially in the heavily mine-contaminated countries where it matters the most,” said ICBL Ambassador Jody Williams, who shared the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize with the ICBL. “Clearly we are succeeding in our struggle to eradicate this weapon. But even bigger challenges remain, to convince hold-out governments to come on board, to ensure effective implementation of and compliance with the treaty, to get mines out of the ground within the ten-year deadline, and to provide adequate assistance to landmine victims,” said Ms. Williams.

There are 143 States Parties to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, which entered into force with unprecedented speed on 1 March 1999. An additional nine countries have signed but not yet ratified the treaty that prohibits the use, production, trade and stockpiling of antipersonnel mines, and requires clearance of mined areas within ten years. Since the last Landmine Monitor report, nine countries joined the treaty including Burundi and Sudan, which are both significantly mine-affected, and Belarus, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey, which are also mine-affected and combined have over ten million stockpiled antipersonnel mines to destroy.

The ICBL’s Landmine Monitor Report 2004 cites compelling evidence of use of antipersonnel mines by four governments since May 2003: Georgia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, and Russia. In contrast, the first Landmine Monitor Report 1999 identified 15 governments using antipersonnel mines in the 1998/1999 reporting period.

“One of the greatest success stories of the Mine Ban Treaty is that sixty-five States Parties have completed the destruction of their stockpiles, collectively destroying more than 37 million antipersonnel mines, including four million mines in the last year,” said Stephen Goose of Human Rights Watch, the Chief Editor of the Landmine Monitor initiative. Every State Party so far has met its treaty-mandated four-year deadline for stockpile destruction, except for Guinea and Turkmenistan, both of which have subsequently completed stockpile destruction.

“Compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty by States Parties has been very impressive, but not absolute or uniform,” said Mr. Goose. Since the Mine Ban Treaty entered into force, the ICBL has consistently raised questions about how States Parties interpret and implement certain aspects of Articles 1, 2, and 3. In particular, the ICBL has expressed concerns regarding the issues of joint military operations with non-States Parties, the prohibition on assisting banned acts, foreign stockpiling and transit of antipersonnel mines, mines with sensitive fuzes and antihandling devices, and the permissible number of antipersonnel mines retained for training and development purposes. The ICBL has pointed out that some States Parties have diverged from the predominant legal interpretation and predominant State practice on these matters.

Forty-two countries remain outside of the Mine Ban Treaty, including China, Russia, and the United States, most of the Middle East, most of the former Soviet republics, and many Asian states. In February 2004, the United States abandoned its long-held goal of eventually eliminating all antipersonnel mines and joining the treaty.

Still, the power of the mine ban movement is reflected in the fact that a de facto global ban on the trade of antipersonnel mines has been in effect since the mid-1990s, with only a very low level of illicit trafficking and unacknowledged trade taking place. Moreover, of the more than 50 countries known to have produced antipersonnel mines, all but 15 have formally renounced production.

From 1999 to 2003, more than 1,100 square kilometers of land were cleared, resulting in the destruction of more than four million antipersonnel mines, nearly one million antivehicle mines, and many more millions of pieces of unexploded ordnance. “There is now consistent and reliable evidence to show that mine action is making a

measurable difference in the lives of millions of people living in mine-affected countries,” said Ms. Sara Sekkenes of Norwegian People's Aid, co-chair of the ICBL Mine Action Working Group, while cautioning that global mine action numbers should not be regarded as precise. “Clearly tremendous progress has been made in the field of humanitarian mine action using the comprehensive framework provided by the Mine Ban Treaty,” she added. The past five years have witnessed the initiation and expansion of many mine action programs, and ever-greater amounts of land being returned to communities for productive use.

Some form of mine clearance was reported in 2003 and 2004 in a total of 65 countries, including the first humanitarian mine clearance operations in Armenia, Chile, Senegal, and Tajikistan. In 2003 alone, a combined total of more than 149 million square meters (149 square kilometers) of land was cleared, resulting in the destruction of at least 174,167 antipersonnel mines, 9,330 antivehicle mines, and 2.6 million items of unexploded ordnance (UXO).

According to Landmine Monitor Report 2004, 83 countries are mine-affected, including 52 States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. The Mine Ban Treaty requires States Parties to clear all mined areas within ten years of joining the treaty. States Parties that have declared completion of mine clearance since 1999 include Bulgaria (October 1999), Moldova (August 2000), Costa Rica (December 2002), Czech Republic (April 2003), Djibouti (January 2004), and, most recently, Honduras (June 2004).

However, in 2003 and 2004, no mine clearance or mine risk education activities were recorded in 13 States Parties. “Without sufficient and sustained resources, we fear that many States Parties will not meet their treaty obligation to remove emplaced mines within ten years,” said Mr. Stan Brabant of Handicap International and Landmine Monitor Research Coordinator for mine risk education. “This is a critical time, and our goal of a mine-free world is within reach,” he added.

Landmine Monitor has identified about US\$2.07 billion in donor mine action contributions from 1992-2003. Of that 12-year total, 65 percent (\$1.35 billion) was provided in the past five years (1999-2003), since the entry into force of the Mine Ban Treaty. For 2003, Landmine Monitor has identified \$339 million in mine action funding by more than 24 donors. This is an increase of \$25 million, or 8 percent, from 2002, and an increase of \$102 million, or 43 percent, from 2001. Major increases were registered in 2003 for the European Commission and the United States, as well as Canada and Sweden.

In 2003, Afghanistan (\$75 million) and Iraq (\$55 million) received 38 percent of global mine action funding. Meanwhile, an unusually large number of mine-affected countries experienced a decline in donor contributions to mine action in 2003. Mine action funding fell most severely in 2003 for Vietnam and Cambodia, but decreases were also experienced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eritrea, Somaliland, Laos, and Ethiopia. In 2003, several of the major donors provided significantly less mine action funding, including Japan, Austria, Italy, Australia, France, and the Netherlands.

The number of reported new mine casualties declined in the majority of mine-affected countries in 2003, and dropped significantly in some heavily mined countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka. Landmine Monitor identified 8,065 new casualties caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in 2003, compared to 8,333 in 2002. However, many casualties go unreported and Landmine Monitor estimates there are now between 15,000 and 20,000 new casualties annually around the world; Xfar fewer than the 26,000 per year estimated in the 1990s.

“The declining landmine casualty rate is heartening, but there are still an appalling number of people, especially children, killed and maimed by landmines every year in virtually every region of the world,” said Ms. Sheree Bailey of Handicap International, Landmine Monitor’s Victim Assistance Research Coordinator. “The stark reality is that there is an ever-growing number of mine survivors in the world and in the vast majority of mine-affected countries, neither the national governments nor international donors are doing nearly enough to provide for their needs,” she added.

According to Landmine Monitor, in 2003, new landmine and UXO casualties were recorded in 65 countries. A total of 86 percent of reported new casualties were identified as civilians and 23 percent were children.

The major progress in the past five years in preventing antipersonnel mines from being laid and in clearing existing minefields has not been matched in the area of victim assistance. Landmine Monitor reports that while

global mine action funding has increased greatly since 1999, identifiable resources for mine victim assistance have actually declined (US\$29.8 million in 1999 compared to US\$28.2 million in 2003). Resources for victim assistance as a percentage of total mine action funding have decreased significantly and steadily from 14.9 percent in 1999 to 8.3 percent in 2003.

“In many mine-affected countries the assistance available to rehabilitate and reintegrate landmine survivors back into society remains desperately inadequate,” said Ms. Bailey. “If governments are serious in their commitment to assist survivors, funding for healthcare and the disability sector must be significantly increased and sustained over the long-term,” she added. Landmine Monitor identified only 35 countries receiving resources from other States for mine victim assistance programs in 2003, with the majority of resources being provided for physical rehabilitation programs.

Landmine Monitor estimates that there are somewhere between 300,000 and 400,000 mine survivors in at least 121 countries today. From 1999 to September 2004, Landmine Monitor recorded more than 42,500 new landmine and UXO casualties from incidents in at least 75 countries.

Landmine Monitor Report 2004: Toward a Mine-Free World is the sixth annual report by the ICBL. It contains information on landmine use, production, trade, stockpiling, demining, casualties and victim assistance in every country of the world. This year’s 1,300-page report is a special edition covering the past five years, in anticipation of the first five-year Review Conference for the Mine Ban Treaty. On Monday, 29 November, the ICBL will present the report to diplomats attending the review conference in Kenya, known as the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World.

The Landmine Monitor initiative is coordinated by a “Core Group” of five ICBL organizations. Human Rights Watch is the lead organization and others include Handicap International, Kenya Coalition Against Landmines, Mines Action Canada, and Norwegian People’s Aid. A total of 110 Landmine Monitor researchers in 93 countries systematically collected and analyzed information from a wide variety of sources for this comprehensive report. This unique civil society initiative constitutes the first time that non-governmental organizations have come together in a sustained, coordinated and systematic way to monitor and report on the implementation of an international disarmament or humanitarian law treaty.

The full Landmine Monitor report and related documents are available online in various languages at www.icbl.org/lm/2004.