

BAN MINES NEWSLETTER

A Newsletter from Handicap International

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EDITORIAL

During 2005, ICBL and Handicap International continued to support the implementation of the Action Plan that was adopted at the Nairobi Summit. The number of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty rose to 147, while in addition, the treaty has become the accepted norm for an increasing number of non-signatories, too.

In the meanwhile, the issue of cluster munitions gained momentum. Like landmines, cluster munitions often claim many civilian victims after a war, in particular children. Cluster munitions are gradually attracting more attention from civil society and governments. Campaigns against cluster munitions have started in various countries. In the Belgian Senate, a bill was passed on 7 July 2005 which bans production, stockpiling and trade of cluster munitions. If the Chamber of Representatives also approves this bill, Belgium will become the first country in the world to ban cluster munitions. Similar legislation is being prepared in other European countries...

Handicap International is stepping up its efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. In this capacity, it played an active role as one of the NGOs which from 1 to 12 August attended the negotiations in New York of the UN International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of People with Disabilities.

We look forward to the outcome of the drive to ban cluster munitions. Are we on the way to a new Ottawa?

**HANDICAP
INTERNATIONAL**

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BELGIUM LEADS THE WAY: SENATE BANS CLUSTER MUNITIONS

On 7 July, the Belgian Senate unanimously passed a bill intended to ban the production, storage, possession and trade of cluster munitions. The draft legislation has now been sent across to the Chamber of Representatives for its approval. If the Chamber also passes the bill, Belgium will be the first country to impose a ban on cluster munitions.

The Belgian approach is very simple: the bill adds the word “submunitions” to the act which was published on 9 March 1995 and which prohibits the production, use, storage and transportation of antipersonnel mines. ‘Submunition’ is defined as : “Any munition that, to perform its tasks, separates from a parent munition. This includes all munitions or explosive ordnance designed to explode at some point in time following dispersal or release from the parent cluster munition.”

This will thus be the second time in ten years that Belgium has set an example. In the 1990s, the way was cleared for an historic process that, in slightly over five years, led to a total ban on antipersonnel mines in 147 countries.

The day after the bill banning cluster munitions was passed in the Belgian Senate, the Brussels office of Handicap International received enthusiastic reactions and congratulations from all over the world for the work that had been done (see inset).

HI Switzerland spoke of a “courageous political act” and an “important and hopeful sign.” Here is an extract from its letter to the Swiss public: “Although the step to a ban on cluster munitions doesn’t seem so big for the countries which have ratified the Mine Ban Treaty, Belgium’s political courage is still impressive. This unanimous decision was not taken by the Belgian Senate without debate. Belgium has a large arms industry. Moreover, the prospect of a potential unilateral decision to ban cluster munitions, around a billion of which are already stockpiled around the world, has inevitably met with opposition from the armed forces. They prefer to seek technical solutions – which are bound to fail – to regulate the use of cluster munitions, rather than ban them. Handicap International has made an important contribution to this debate and has demonstrated that the time had come for the Senate to make an historic and decisive choice and hence to prevent countless civilians from falling victim to these devices.”

More: www.senate.be and www.handicap.be

Reactions

“I wish we could swap a few senators with you.” (CMC Egypt)

“Wow! Great news! Congratulations, HI!”
(Human Rights Watch, Washington DC)

“Well done! I hope we shall be able to follow your example soon.”

(CMC Italy)

“Is this the start of a new Ottawa?”

(HI Germany)

Press echoes

“A triumph over the cowards’ weapon (...) Although there is still a long way to go, Belgium can once again get a fundamental process in motion and gradually liberate our planet from a great plague.” (La Libre Belgique, 6 July 2005)

“Peace movement triumphs”

(De Morgen, 6 July 2005)

Example to be followed in the UK?

The “All Party Parliamentary Group on Landmine Eradication” (APLEG), which met on 19 July 2005, showed considerable interest in the Belgian draft legislation banning submunitions. Samantha Rennie, director of HI-UK, briefed the group on the Belgian bill and set out HI’s standpoint. Zak Johnson, a former senior technical advisor for HI in Laos and Afghanistan, gave a presentation on cluster munitions. The working group expressed a wish to meet the British Minister of Defense and the Belgian bill’s author, Senator Philippe Mahoux.

On 16 June 2005 the Belgian Senate passed a bill which bans direct or indirect investment in companies involved in the production, use or transportation of landmines.

More information: www.netwerk-vlaanderen.be

Campaign against cluster bombs

Handicap International is urging people all over the world to sign a petition against cluster bombs. In addition, numerous other awareness-raising campaigns are planned, which vary from country to country.

In Germany, HI is organizing an action day on 8 October in Munich, with a shoe pyramid and a symbolic minefield on which the clearance of mines and cluster bombs will be demonstrated. Documentaries, lectures and exhibitions are being used to illustrate the theme of landmines and cluster munitions. Thus an exhibition is being opened in Augsburg on 9 November.

Since May, HI has been urging politicians in France to oppose cluster bombs through a postcard campaign and via its website is calling for France to follow the example of the Belgian Senate. In July HIF launched a campaign aimed at the general public, "Non aux BASM (bombes à sous-munitions)" with national posters, TV and radio ads, an online petition and the involvement of VIPs (including Catherine Deneuve and Juliette Binoche). In October an awareness-raising week will be held: there will be a seminar in the French Senate on 6 October, an exhibition and the screening of the film "Turtles can fly"; on 7 October, the CMC, the international coalition against cluster munitions, will assemble; and on 8 October shoe pyramids will be constructed in 36 French cities.

In the United Kingdom HI is planning a shoe pyramid action in November. From 30 October to 5 November, an awareness-raising week will be held about the issue of landmines and cluster munitions.

In Luxembourg HI is calling on politicians to follow the Belgian Senate's example and will be mobilizing the general public in the city of Luxembourg on 1 October with a shoe pyramid, a photo petition and a multimedia campaign.

In Belgium HI is focusing on the vote in the Belgian Chamber of Representatives on the bill for a ban on cluster munitions, and is organizing an awareness-raising campaign throughout the country.

Petition
By the start of the campaign in June, Handicap International had already collected over 108,000 signatures for a petition against cluster munitions!



The Belgian Senator, Philippe Mahoux, who introduced the bill for a ban on cluster munitions, visited a Handicap International project in Cambodia in September 2005 in order to gain a better understanding of the issue and of the situation of survivors of antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions.

After the ban on cluster munitions had been approved in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Commission of the Belgian Senate, Senator Mahoux told the newspaper on 6 July 2005 "La Libre Belgique": "This demonstrates the value of a joint effort on the part of NGOs and politicians on certain concrete issues."

More information: www.streubomben.de
www.sousmunitions.org
www.handicap-international.org.uk
www.handicap-international.lu
www.handicap.be

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: INFO DAY ON LANDMINES WITH JODY WILLIAMS

Zero tolerance on landmines and similar weapons, this was the call from Luisa Morgantini, Chairperson of the European Parliament, Development Committee, at the opening of a session on landmines in Brussels on 16 June 2005. Jody Williams, who won the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize along with the ICBL, and Wolfgang Petritsch, President of the First Review Conference in Nairobi, addressed the session.

Representatives of NGOs, including Handicap International, of international organizations and of states stressed the challenges we still face in moving towards a mine-free world and drew attention to the need for accelerated mine clearance, more financial resources for victim assistance and rehabilitation, and a renewed effort to achieve a worldwide application of the Mine Ban Treaty. This depends on securing the commitment of those states that have yet to sign up to the treaty.

The theme of the day was "Working for a mine-free world", and that, said Jody Williams, is not just a 'snappy slogan': "A mine-free world is essential if we are to put an end to the human suffering caused by these weapons. Mine-free means a world in which ALL landmines have been destroyed. For the parties to the treaty, complete mine clearance and support for landmine survivors is thus a necessity," was how the ICBL put it in a press release.

Wolfgang Petritsch, a former UN High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, also called for the complete implementation of the treaty: stocks must be totally destroyed and funds must be released to implement the treaty in its entirety. He referred to the treaty as "Perhaps the only successful disarmament initiative in the world today, against a background of steady, ongoing militarization." He described the remarkable progress since the treaty's entry into force: the use and production of landmines has tailed off, the trade in them has virtually stopped, the number of new victims has decreased, two-thirds of the countries in the world have signed up and many others are in *de facto* agreement with the standard that the treaty sets, including as regards the destruction of stocks. "This is why the Mine Ban Treaty is "the only disarmament tool that works," concluded Wolfgang Petritsch, contrasting the disappointing developments in the area of the nuclear non-proliferation pact.

As Jody Williams put it, the Mine Ban Treaty demonstrates that "International legislation really does work, where there's a political will." She called for the continuation of mine clearance operations and an increase in support for landmine victims.

Stan Brabant (HI) gave a presentation on the production of landmines and cluster munitions. He listed the countries that produce landmines and cluster munitions and concluded with a call for stricter regulations on investments in such weapons. He encouraged all parties to work towards a ban on cluster munitions.

Diplomatic representatives of states which have not signed the treaty (such as Egypt, Finland, Israel and Russia) gave presentations, and although there were no notable changes in their positions, they did show a willingness to engage, demonstrating that the treaty's principles can no longer be ignored at international level.

As well as diplomats and members of parliament, mine clearance specialists and landmine survivors also spoke. Plamenko Priganica, who lost a leg from a landmine during the war in Bosnia, made a contribution which attracted notice. After wondering, "Why me?", the head of the Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) in Bosnia and Herzegovina has gone on to support thousands of people who have shared a similar fate.

The European Parliament's resolution of 7 July calls for a mine-free world, meaning among other things:

- the accession of all states, particularly China, Russia, Finland and Poland;
- mine clearance and assistance for survivors, including in non-signatory countries;
- the implementation of the Nairobi Action Plan;
- a broader interpretation of the definition of antipersonnel mines;
- more support for regions with minefields;
- a ban on investments in the production of landmines and cluster munitions

More information: www.icbl.org/news/eu

NEW RATIFICATIONS OF THE MINE BAN TREATY

In the last few months, a number of further countries have joined the Mine Ban Treaty.

Latvia recently took a definitive step. Igors Tipans, of the Baltic International Centre for Human Education and ICBL/Landmine Monitor researcher for the three Baltic States, reported that the Latvian Parliament passed a law which clears the way for accession to the Mine Ban Treaty. The accession was official on 1 July 2005.

Ukraine recently ratified the treaty. The Ukrainian CBL and the national Mine Action Center reported that on 18 May 2005 the Ukrainian parliament passed a bill which makes ratification of the Mine Ban Treaty possible. Ukraine signed the treaty on 24 February 1999. Members of Parliament proposed that the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs should send all ratification documents to the UN within 30 days of this ratification. But on 15 September Ukraine was not yet officially registered by the UN as a country that had ratified the treaty.

On 18 August Bhutan acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty.

Vanuatu (Oceania) also ratified. The New Zealand campaign against landmines informed us that Vanuatu's Parliament ratified the Mine Ban Treaty on 27 May 2005. The ratification became official on 16 September 2005 and Vanuatu became the **147th state to join the treaty**.

A number of other countries, including Poland, are close to ratification.

Micronesia informed the ICBL that its congress would ratify the treaty in September 2005.

So far, 147 countries have joined the Mine Ban Treaty. 7 countries have signed the treaty but have yet to ratify it, while 40 countries are still listed as non signatories.

More information: www.icbl.org

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Landmine Victim Assistance in 2004: Overview of the Situation in 24 States Parties, a report released in June 2005 and compiled by Standing Tall and HI for the Working Group on Victim Assistance. See: www.handicap.be

Landmine Monitor Fact Sheets: Article 1, Joint Operations, Foreign Stockpiling, and Transit; Article 2, Mines with Sensitive Fuzes and Antihandling Devices; Article 3, Mines Retained for Training and Research; Article 5, Destruction of Antipersonnel Mines in Mined Areas; Article 7, Transparency Measures; Mine Risk Education Reporting; Non-State Armed Groups and the Mine Ban. See www.icbl.org/lm

Explosive Remnants of War and Mines Other than Anti-Personnel Mines: Global Survey 2003-2004: The first global survey of the devastating impact on civilians, aid workers and peace enforcers of unexploded munitions and antivehicle landmines was launched in Geneva in March 2005 and conducted and published by Landmine Action UK, Mines Action Canada and Actiongroup Landmine.de. More information: www.landmineaction.org

Annual reports 2004 of Handicap International: See www.handicap.be and www.handicap-international.org

What rights for mine victims? Reparation, compensation: from legal analysis to political perspectives, a HI survey from 2005 about landmine survivors, their legal status, compensation possibilities and a compensation fund, illustrated with 4 examples (also in French). See www.handicap-international.org

101 great ideas for the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Mine Survivors, a survey by Standing Tall Australia and Mine Action Canada describing 101 projects in 30 countries. See www.standingtallaustralia.org

MINE ACTION

Australia earmarks more money for mine action

On 29 July the Australian government announced that it will be putting aside 75 million Australian dollars over a period of five years in order to tackle the effects of antipersonnel mines and explosive war remnants. The Australian government says that it is earmarking another 1.5 millions dollar per year for aid to Laos in its efforts against explosive remnants of war. It has consulted the Australian Network of the ICBL and relevant NGOs on the use of the funds.

More information: www.usaid.gov.au

Fact Sheet on mine risk education (MRE)

At the meeting of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, MRE and Mine Action Technologies, HI issued a statement on behalf of the ICBL on the progress in the area of MRE, and called on countries with minefields to integrate MRE further in their wider mine actions such as mine clearance, marking and survey. Landmine Monitor also released a fact sheet about MRE.

More information: www.icbl.org

Mine clearance

During the June meetings of the Standing Committees, a number of countries announced that they would be able to meet the 10-year deadline for mine clearance set in Article 5 of the Mine Ban Treaty. They included Chile, Cyprus, France, Jordan, Nicaragua, Peru, Turkey and Venezuela. A report of the mine action session is available on the ICBL website.

Landmine Monitor issued an important Fact Sheet on Article 5 implementation.

More information: www.icbl.org

Guatemala will declare itself mine-free at the Sixth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty from 28 November to 2 December in Zagreb (Croatia). All mine clearance operations should be over by then. This was announced by the Mine Clearance Committee of the National Congress of Guatemala.

Guatemala has performed mine clearance operations for seven years in 15 departments, 13 high-risk and 2 low risk. Guatemala has thus met the deadline set for the implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty, Article 5 of which states that each State Party undertakes to destroy all antipersonnel mines as soon as possible, but no more than ten years after the treaty has come into effect in that country.

“A country is only ‘mine-safe’ if it is ‘mine-free’”

During the Standing Committee week in Geneva in June, Croatia stated that “A country is only ‘mine-safe’ if it is ‘mine-free’.”

ICBL recorded this statement as “quotation of the day”. It was a sharp response to the claim that a country can be safe without completely ridding itself of mines.

Various countries objected to the notion that ‘mine-safe’ corresponded to the requirements of **Article 5 of the treaty** and emphasized that the requirements must be met in full, meaning that states must clear “all antipersonnel mines under [their] jurisdiction or control.”

NEW PUBLICATION

Informal Village Demining in Cambodia: An Operational Study: This report was published in May 2005 by HI Cambodia and documents the current state of progress on informal mine clearance in Cambodia. The report looks at the impact of new approaches and makes recommendations regarding the role of village deminers. See: www.handicap.be

DESTRUCTION OF STOCKPILED MINES

At present, 69 States Parties to the treaty have already destroyed their stocks. Thirteen States Parties are engaged in stockpile destruction. During the meetings of the Standing Committees in Geneva in June 2005, the ICBL called on the following countries, among others, to completely destroy their stocks by the Sixth Meeting of States Parties: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cyprus, Guinea-Bissau and Guyana. In addition, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mauritania, Tanzania and Uruguay confirmed that they have completed the destruction of their stocks.

Algeria has already destroyed 62 percent of its stocks, which consist of 150,050 landmines. On 28 and 29 March, Handicap International witnessed the destruction of 30,000 mines. This operation, the second phase in the destruction operation, was attended by inter-ministerial Committee for the follow-up and the implementation of the Ottawa Convention, a representative of the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the Canadian Ambassador. Delegation members were able to ask questions, take photos and inspect the stocks before and after the destruction.

More information: www.icbl.org

NEW PUBLICATIONS

World Wide Production and Export of Cluster Munitions. In this report, released in Brussels on 7 April 2005, Human Rights Watch names the countries and companies which produce and export cluster munitions. At least 70 countries stock cluster munitions and the total number of cluster munitions is staggering. The United States alone stocks over a billion cluster munitions.

More information: www.hrw.org

Les sous-munitions et l'Union européenne. Production, Commercialisation, Eléments pour une interdiction is a June 2005 survey conducted by the "Observatoire des Transferts d'Armements" with support from Agir Ici and HI. According to the report, 26 companies in ten EU countries and Switzerland produce and export 60 different models of cluster munitions. The survey is intended to improve transparency and aims to help working towards a ban on cluster munitions.

More information: www.obsarm.org

CCW session: spotlight on cluster munitions

The CCW (Convention on certain Conventional Weapons) experts group met in Geneva in August 2005. The ERW (Explosive Remnants of War) Working Group was dominated by discussions about cluster munitions. Although some countries pointed out that cluster munitions are a legitimate defense weapon, a number of states spoke out positively. Denmark for instance called for negotiations about cluster munitions to start as soon as possible. Canada backed the request by the CMC (Cluster Munition Coalition) that focused discussions should be held about all aspects of the cluster munitions issue. Norway urged states to ban the use of cluster munitions in and near populated areas. Mexico and the Holy See called for a moratorium on the use of cluster munitions until an international agreement can be found. However, the question is whether more discussion in the setting of the CCW experts group actually amounts to heightened commitment, and whether like-minded countries on this issue should not consider setting up a separate working group on cluster munitions, in which the discussions they have wanted for some time now can actually be held.

Human Rights Watch, Pax Christi and Handicap International organized briefings on cluster munitions. At the briefing organized by HI on 10 August, Kevin Bryant gave an overview of the cluster munitions issue, based on his extensive experience of UXO clearance, in particular in Kosovo and Lebanon. Stan Brabant then offered a few thoughts on the recent decision by the Belgian Senate to ban cluster munitions and listed some of the reasons why HI is calling for a ban on the weapon. There were responses from the United States and Ireland, among others.

More information: www.stopclustermunitions.org

UNITED STATES TO DECIDE IN DECEMBER ON PRODUCTION OF “SPIDER” ANTIPERSONNEL MINE

According to information released on 3 August by Human Rights Watch (HRW), co-founder of the ICBL, the Bush administration will decide in December whether it will resume production of antipersonnel mines. The decision will be about the “Spider” system. The United States has not produced antipersonnel mines since 1997.

Furthermore, HRW reports that the Pentagon has requested a total of US\$1.3 billion for the development of a new antipersonnel mines system, the so-called “Intelligent Munitions System,” on which a decision will be made in 2008.

ICBL and Handicap International are extremely concerned about this, as the U.S. is opening the door to renewed production in this way, and possibly to the export of antipersonnel mines. This happens at a time when 147 countries are complying strictly with a total ban on landmines and countries that have not yet joined the treaty have instituted a moratorium on the production, export and use of antipersonnel mines. Zero landmine production has more or less become the accepted norm.

The U.S. has thus altered its position, and is no longer seeking alternatives to antipersonnel mines with a view to joining the treaty in 2006. In so doing, it has abandoned its policy of the last ten years, the purpose of which was to gradually phase out antipersonnel mines.

The ICBL and Handicap International support HRW’s recommendations and urge all States Parties to express their objections to the United States. On 1 March 2004, the ICBL and HI had already issued a statement condemning the Bush administration’s new landmine policy.

More information: www.icbl.org

EIGHT CLUSTER MUNITION PRODUCERS EXCLUDED FROM THE NORWEGIAN PETROLEUM FUND

The Norwegian Minister of Finance, Per-Kristian Foss, said in a statement on 2 September 2005 that 8 companies would be excluded from the Norwegian Petroleum Fund, because they produce cluster bombs (or containers, submunitions or other components which are essential for their functioning) and hence do not comply with the fund’s ethical guidelines. The companies are **Alliant Techsystems Inc., EADS Co, EADS Finance BV, General Dynamics Corporation, L3 Communications Holdings Inc., Lockheed Martin Corp., Raytheon Co. and Thales SA**. The ethics advisory council based its position on information from ICBL and other sources.

More information: www.odin.dep.no and www.norges-bank.no

CALENDAR:

October - November:
Campaigns against cluster bombs:

1/10: Luxembourg

6-8/10: France

8/10: Germany: Munich

9/11: Germany: Augsburg

30/10 to 5/11: UK

November

14-22: CCW meeting, Geneva, Switzerland

22-23: Launch of Landmine Monitor Report 2005

28/11 – 2/12: Sixth Meeting of States Parties, Zagreb, Croatia

December

3: Seventh anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty and International Day of Disabled Persons.

7-8/12: Conference on “Strengthening European Action on Non Proliferation and Disarmament of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, Small Arms/Light Weapons (SALW) and Explosive Remnants of War,” organized by the International Security Information Service (ISIS) Europe in Brussels.

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