

**“Assisting Landmine Survivors: A Decade of Efforts”
AP-Mine Ban Convention 10th Anniversary Symposium
Vienna, Austria
12 February 2007**

Concluding Remarks - Susan B. Walkerⁱ

Dear Landmine Survivors, Excellencies and Partners in the AP Mine Ban Movement,

*“Early one morning on the edge of a refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border, the body of a young woman was found brutally axed to death. The UN Protection Officer investigating the tragedy said to me it was obvious that a violent struggle had taken place, but no one had heard any cries for help. The sad truth became searingly clear when the family was finally found. They said the girl was deaf and mute. NO ONE HAD HEARD HER CRIES FOR HELP. This is symbolic of why we - the NGOs and landmine victims - are among you these three weeks to be the **voice for those who have no voice**. As Amb. Molander declared on Tuesday, “We shall listen to them.” ...*

We implore you today to not only listen, but to act in such a way that you make a monumental contribution to humankind. The fate of future generations is in your hands.

*Landmines and their medical, social, economic and environmental consequences are an international public health and human rights disaster of epidemic proportions. They have been called “weapons of mass destruction in slow motion” and “crimes against humankind”. Each country represented today has the historic opportunity to stop this mass carnage of human lives by putting an end to this insidious weapon and calling for a **TOTAL BAN ON LANDMINES.... NOT “eventually” but NOW.**”*

Obviously these are not excerpts from a recent speech, but the one I gave on behalf of HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL at the first Review Conference of the CCW (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons) on 28 September 1995 here in Vienna, which Ken Rutherfordⁱⁱ has referred to several times.

FAST FORWARD to 12 February 2007 and, as Ken just said, “The landmines issue has come a long way since then...”.

WE HAVE THE “FRAMEWORK FOR A MINE-FREE WORLD”: the 1997 *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production, Stockpiling and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and On Their Destruction*, which is rapidly becoming an international NORM, only 8 years after its entry-into-force (1 March 1999) with 153 countries on board. Now we must implement it on the ground where it counts.

Thank you Ambassador Petritsch, dear Wolfgang, and Austria for hosting this important 10th anniversary symposium and to the ISU for their usual impeccable preparations. Thank you also for the honor and privilege of inviting me to provide some concluding remarks. Austria was among the 8 countries, which came to the first meeting of “pro-ban countries” called by the ICBL on 19 January 1996 in Geneva. These countries and their courageous diplomats deserve mention, as they had the vision to achieve the Convention: **Norway, Ireland, South Africa, Canada, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland and Mexico.**

It is good to see several people here today who were also in Vienna in 1995: Ken, Judithⁱⁱⁱ, Thomas Hajnoczi^{iv} (the “Father of the Convention”) and Bennie Lombard^v. And many new partners, like all of you here today, have joined these efforts. Your ongoing commitment and perseverance is needed if we are to progress further.

In this 10th anniversary year, we must, indeed, celebrate the successes of the AP-MBC Convention and the progress to date, including in victim assistance. *For the Convention has already saved many lives and prevented new victims, given the decrease in use of anti-personnel mines, destruction of stockpiles and mine clearance efforts to date.*

We must also use this anniversary year to focus on the challenges remaining to fully implement the Convention - for mine clearance is far from complete, hundreds of thousands of landmine survivors require a lifetime of assistance and there is a new mine victim every 30 minutes or about 96 new mine victims worldwide in the 48 hours we are here in Vienna.

As reported in the annual Landmine Monitor Report of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), there are still fifteen to twenty thousand new mine victims per year.

This presentation is dedicated to Suon Chreuk, who died one year ago today of long-term complications from his landmine injury. Chreuk was a Cambodian and international campaigner since 1993, a wheelchair worker and a man of great courage and integrity with a beautiful smile as you can see in the slides. He left behind a wife, two children and others he was supporting and an ache in the hearts of many who knew him.

It is people like Chreuk and the literally thousands of mine victims I worked with for 15 years in SE Asia that inspire me and others in this amazing partnership of the mine ban movement to ensure that we achieved and now fully implement the Convention. I have experienced the horror of a 34 year old Cambodian man being killed by an AP mine 400 metres from me, leaving behind a wife and 3 small children and have carried a nineteen year old Cambodian boy to the hospital 2 hours after he was blown up by an AP mine.

I have also had the joy of talking with one of our patients happily working in his radio repair shop, who thanked us for “*giving him back his life*”. WHY? Because HI’s Social and Economic Reintegration Programme had provided him with the opportunity to establish a livelihood. He was able to marry and have two children, which he said would never have happened otherwise. *As Alberto Cairo (ICRC Afghanistan) said today, “The dream of everybody is to have a job and to be self-sufficient”. Landmine survivors have identified economic reintegration as their top priority, as has been said repeatedly.*

We have had a day full of rich, informative, practical, field-based and moving presentations on the challenges faced and “lessons learned”, on economic, social and psychological reintegration of landmine survivors and on legislation and policy frameworks. It is not necessary to attempt to summarize them, as the presentations will surely be available through Kerry^{vi}, Sophie or Sheree at the Implementation Support Unit.

May I challenge each and every one of you to become CHAMPIONS for the FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, including its Article 6.3 provisions for victim assistance. Make concrete planning for S.M.A.R.T.^{vii} victim assistance objectives a priority in your country – be you from a mine-affected OR donor country or implementing NGO or international organization. INCLUDE landmine survivors and mine-affected community leaders in your national planning and participation in international conferences.

We know the challenges remaining. We have the experience of “lessons learned” and we have the solutions. Physical rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration were not invented by the Convention, nor are they “rocket science”; but they will not reach the landmine survivors and mine-affected communities, whose hopes and expectations rose with the 1997 Convention, unless VICTIM ASSISTANCE IS PRIORITIZED AND IMPLEMENTED IN ALL MINE-AFFECTED COUNTRIES.

Much progress has been made been made, but much more remains to be done to reach our goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines and quality survivor assistance.

In conclusion, the AP Mine Ban Convention is one of the few multilateral processes, which is working successfully today. The close partnership between governments and civil society has been key to this success. Continued success in the full implementation of the Convention will not only resolve this global humanitarian crisis, but will also underline the utmost importance of the Rule of Law and International Humanitarian Law. Collectively we have made history. Collectively we will work to ensure that place in history, by translating those unequivocal words on paper into life-saving reality on the ground.

For the sake of the millions living in mined communities and the tens of thousands of new mine victims each year, we must and we will succeed in securing a world where children and adults can “walk, play and live without fear” that their next step may be their last.

THANK YOU.

ⁱ Susan B. Walker, Humanitarian Affairs and Disarmament Consultant. From May 1994 to May 2005, she worked for Handicap International (HI) and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, following 15 years of humanitarian relief and development work in Southeast Asia (1979-1994), including ten years as HI’s Regional Director for Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and the Thai-Burmese border.

ⁱⁱ Ken Rutherford, Co-Founder of Landmine Survivors Network.

ⁱⁱⁱ Judith Majlath, Austrian Aid for Mine Victims, Austrian section of the ICBL and Austrian section of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC).

^{iv} Dr. Thomas Hajnoczi, Director, Department of Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Austria

^v Bennie Lombard, Counsellor (Vienna Mission), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of South Africa

^{vi} Kerry Brinkert, Manager of the AP Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD); Sophie Delfolie, Programme Officer; Sheree Bailey, Victim Assistance Specialist.

^{vii} S.M.A.R.T. = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound.