



**ICRC**

**First Review Conference of the States Parties  
to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production  
and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines  
and on their Destruction**

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of the  
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Geneva**

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On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World. The Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines represents, without a doubt, one of the great success stories of the international community in recent years in the humanitarian field. I will not repeat here the impressive list of achievements in the Convention's first five years. My focus will be on the significance of this unique Convention.

The Convention has demonstrated the relevance of central rules of international humanitarian law and their widespread public support. These are the rules that prohibit weapons which are indiscriminate and those which cause, by design, injuries that are out of proportion to what is needed for the military objective of taking a combatant out of action. The failure, over decades, to scrupulously implement these rules produced abundant evidence, in broken lives and shattered limbs, of the need for this Convention. This led, for the first time in history, to the banning of a weapon that was in use throughout the world. As new technologies create the capacity for new kinds of weapons it is essential to keep these rules, and the lessons of this Convention, in mind.

But the Convention does more than prohibit a weapon. It contains a set of promises made by political leaders who gathered to sign the Convention in Ottawa seven years ago today and by the Parliaments that ratified it. They promised that mine-affected communities could one day be free of the fear of death or mutilation by hidden anti-personnel mines. They promised that mine survivors would receive the assistance they need to rebuild their lives and live in dignity. And they promised to future generations that the scourge of anti-personnel mines would be forever ended. We are here today to renew these promises, to leave no doubt about our will to keep these promises.

These promises must be renewed now because the five years ahead will be the most crucial phase in the life of this Convention. We must ensure that the mine clearance deadlines that begin to fall in 2009 are met. We must produce a measurable improvement in the lives of landmine survivors and affected communities. We must maintain the outstanding record in meeting deadlines for stockpile destruction. We must continue our progress towards universal adherence. And we must ensure that all mines which function as anti-personnel mines are eliminated. This will require more political will, more hard work and more resources than the past five years. The ICRC is deeply concerned that, at current rates of clearance, many mine-affected States Parties will have difficulty meeting their deadlines. Until clearance of mined areas is complete it will be essential to expand mine risk education.

The Convention is also far more than a legal instrument. It is a living process that has brought out the best in those who have joined in its mission. This Convention has grown from an impossible dream, to a shared commitment of 143 States, to a humanitarian programme of action mobilizing thousands of people around the world. This achievement reflects the extraordinary personal commitment that the Convention has evoked – among people in government, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, UN agencies, mine action organizations, victim assistance projects and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The success of the Convention will depend on maintaining this spirit of commitment and cooperation well into the future.

As this Convention matures we must never lose sight of those who have inspired our efforts: the victims and survivors of landmine incidents. We need to do far more to ensure that the Convention's promises to survivors are fulfilled. While the Convention's preventive measures have undoubtedly saved many thousands of lives, most mine victims have yet to see a significant improvement in their lives through adequate medical care and opportunities for physical rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration. Assistance for mine victims must be part of enhanced national efforts to improve the health infrastructure in affected communities. This will benefit not only landmine victims but also other disabled persons and the population at large in mine-affected areas. Health structures in mine-infested areas need to be given priority because of the increased needs they face in caring for mine victims. This is recognised in the Convention.

Since the Convention's adoption the ICRC has seen some supplementary resources made available for victim assistance and some new programmes launched in mine affected countries where it is present. In the last six years, the ICRC has added 42 physical rehabilitation centres in 12 countries to those it runs or supports. In the same six years, out of some 190,000 orthopaedic appliances that ICRC-supported programmes have provided to disabled persons, over 105'000 prostheses were provided to amputees, of which 60 percent were mine victims. The ICRC's Special Fund for the Disabled has also increased its assistance to former ICRC projects and others. However, it should be noted that much of this assistance reflects the resumption of support to former ICRC projects which were turned over to local entities but could not be sustained due to inadequate resources and strategic planning. Some programmes in mine-affected countries have been closed and others are functioning well below their capacity, despite continuing needs. We believe that States Parties can do better.

Each year thousands of new mine victims still lack access to adequate emergency care and specialised surgery. Of those who survive their injuries, far too few have access to rehabilitation centres. Some are too traumatized from war and injuries to seek help. For those in areas of tension, travel can be too dangerous. For others transport is too expensive. In Angola alone large numbers of amputees have never received rehabilitative care and there is a need, just for refitting current patients, of many thousands more prostheses than are currently produced. In many countries when a prosthesis no longer fits or is broken survivors can wait months or even years for support. Can you imagine waiting that long to walk again? Some tell us this experience can be like losing one's leg all over again. Mobile outreach programs, such as those the ICRC supports in Cambodia, can be part of the solution by bringing orthopaedic services to remote areas. But greater efforts are needed to make care accessible.

Just as surgical care isn't enough, neither is a prosthesis. For this reason the Convention promises support for the socio-economic reintegration of mine victims. In too many cases patients leave our centres to become beggars, to be neglected by their communities, to be abandoned by their spouses, to live their lives without the dignity of being able to support themselves and their families. The ICRC has tried to help by employing disabled persons, including mine victims, in its orthopaedic centres. In Afghanistan the ICRC has established educational, vocational and micro-credit programs to enable the disabled - with excellent results. But together we need to do better.

The ICRC welcomes the commitments States have made in the Nairobi Action Plan to increase efforts to meet the needs of mine victims and survivors. This will require strategic planning at the national and international levels and more investment. As a step towards fulfilling this commitment we urge States Parties, as does the Action Plan, to include health, rehabilitation and social service professionals in the work of this Convention at the national and regional levels and in the work of its Standing Committee on Victim Assistance. It is precisely such actors who should have primary responsibility for implementing a State's victim assistance obligations.

The history of this Convention has a lot to do with courage and commitment: the courage of mine victims struggling to rebuild their lives; the courage of those in this room who first believed that a ban on anti-personnel mines was possible; the courage of political leaders who came to support a ban on this terrible weapon and the courage of people in the field who risk their lives daily to fulfil the Convention's mine clearance commitments, help communities avoid mine injuries and care for the people who survive them.

Fulfilling all the promises of this Convention and of the Nairobi Action Plan will require just as much courage and commitment in the next five years. The ICRC is dedicated to this Convention for the long term and is ready to do its part. We welcome the pledges made by States in the Declaration and Action Plan. The past five years have demonstrated that the promises of this Convention can be fulfilled. It is now up to all of us to ensure that they are.

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