

NEWS RELEASE



Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE OF THE FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE

27 February 2004

US Landmines Policy - Disregard for Multilateralism ?

Geneva—**Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch**, the Austrian diplomat designated to preside over *the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World* has charged that USA's new landmines policy has more to do with the administration's controversial approach to multilateralism and internationally-accepted norms than it does with a commitment to address a pressing humanitarian problem. Petritsch's remarks were in response to news that after 2010, the USA will no longer use so-called "persistent landmines" and that it will continue to disregard the Ottawa Convention prohibiting anti-personnel mines.

"Far from being a rogue effort on the part of a small group of militarily-insignificant states, the Ottawa Convention has taken hold as the international standard of action to address – in a conclusive manner – the human suffering caused by landmines," said Petritsch. "With 141 States having accepted the Convention, the USA's announcement that it will turn its back on the Convention's high standards seems to reaffirm that while international rules are fine for the rest of the world, the USA will go its own way."

Since the Convention took effect on March 1, 1999, the use and supply of anti-personnel mines have been markedly reduced and few new landmines are being produced. In addition, the Convention's members have destroyed more than 31 million stockpiled mines. Vast tracts of mined land have been cleared and the number of new victims is decreasing.

"There is no stopping the determination of the 141 countries – including more than 50 states affected by landmines – which have accepted a higher standard of international rules regarding anti-personnel mines and that these rules should apply to all states equally," said Petritsch.

In November of this year, the *Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World* will take place. At the *Nairobi Summit*, world leaders will review progress made and establish an action plan to ensure the elimination of anti-personnel mines. The biggest challenge facing the *Nairobi Summit* will be to secure the global commitment necessary to get the job done.

"The US has stated that communities victimised by mines left behind after conflict deserve the full cooperation of all who support mine action and that differing policy approaches deserve to be discussed," said Petritsch. "Therefore, I expect that rather than turning its back on the international community the US will participate actively at *the Nairobi Summit*."

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BACKGROUND

- Negotiations on the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction*, as the Ottawa Convention is officially called, were completed in Oslo on September 18, 1997. On March 1, 1999 it entered into force and as of 27 February 2004, 141 States had acceded to the Convention.
- The Convention speaks of a determination of its parties “*to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.*” This determination is manifested in obligations aimed at: prohibiting the use, retention, production and transfer of the weapon; destroying existing stockpiles; clearing mined areas; and, assisting landmine survivors.
- Each State Party has four years to destroy existing stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. As a result of the implementation of this obligation, as of 27 February, **119 States** now no longer hold stockpiles of anti-personnel mines and more than **31 million mines have been destroyed**.
- Approximately **50 States Parties have mined areas**, which they will have to clear within 10 years. One of these states – Costa Rica – already has indicated that it has fulfilled its clearance responsibilities.
- Approximately 20 States Parties have significant numbers of **landmine survivors** which will require **life-long care, rehabilitation and reintegration support**. Most of these countries are the world’s poorest and will therefore need significant outside assistance in fulfilling this obligation.
- The Convention was established and continues to operate on a solid foundation of meaningful partnership cooperation. Since the Convention’s establishment, more than **US\$ 1.7 billion** has been generated globally **in support of the Convention’s aims**.
- The Convention’s spirit of partnership extends as well to relations between the Convention’s State Parties and non-governmental and international organizations, which play an instrumental role in assisting States Parties in meeting their obligations. In addition, it was non-governmental organizations, through the **International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)**, that first pushed for a prohibition. For its efforts, the ICBL and its Coordinator, **Jody Williams**, were awarded the **1997 Nobel Peace Prize**.
- According to the Convention, a **Review Conference** shall be convened five years after the entry into force of this international treaty. The Convention entered into force on 1 March 1999, implying that a Review Conference would be held in **2004**.
- In September 2003, the Convention’s States Parties agreed to hold the First Review Conference – the *Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World* in the Kenyan capital from 29 November to 3 December 2004. In addition, the States Parties designated Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch as **President** of the Convention’s First Review Conference and urged participation in the conference at the highest possible level.
- **Wolfgang Petritsch**, Austrian Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, served from 1999-2002 as High Representative of the International Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1998-1999 he was EU Special Envoy in Kosovo and EU-Chief Negotiator in the Kosovo peace talks in Rambouillet and Paris.
- At the *Nairobi Summit* world leaders will assess the **enormous progress** made in ridding the world of anti-personnel mines since the Convention was established. In addition, they are expected to adopt a powerful declaration and action programme recommitting themselves to overcome the challenges that remain.