

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE:
SETTING REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION TARGETS**

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THE REAY GROUP WORKSHOP:

***PROGRESS IN MEETING THE AIMS OF
THE OTTAWA CONVENTION
IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE***

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The region of the South Eastern Europe is well on track with the implementation of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. All the countries of the region are now States Parties to the Convention. Significant progress has been made in every area of concern, including stockpile destruction, mine-clearance activities and humanitarian assistance to victims. By the end of this year, at the Nairobi Summit, our region is likely to be in a position to report a positive record of achievements and to renew the commitment of its participating states to move forward with unfailing determination and increased effectiveness. In all these, its specific contribution of the Reay Group is also to be found.

Looking back on these past years, since the establishment of the Reay Group in 2000, we can state in all fairness that the value added of the Group's work has been particularly evident in its main areas of concern through its lobbying and political advocacy function, as an informal, open forum for a meaningful exchange of information and dissemination of best practices, as an enhancer of official and public awareness about the real dimension of the land-mines problem and about the targets and deadlines of the Ottawa Convention, and as a promoter and facilitator of partnerships between government authorities, donors, organizations, specialized business entities, NGOs and the media. This will have to be a continuous exercise regardless of the existing formal arrangements or those that may be envisaged in the future.

Let us not forget that parts of our region were in recent past the theatre of terrible military confrontations and guerilla warfare, that the legacy of the Cold War divide and the other inter-state tensions have not yet been fully overcome. There is still a lot of unfinished business to be taken care of. People in the region

are still being killed or maimed by landmines. As the region as a whole is well advanced toward becoming free of landmine stockpiles by 2008, one year ahead of the Second Review Conference, the emphasis of mine action is shifting from a security priority to long-term comprehensive activities focused primarily on humanitarian, economic and social aspects. We need to reiterate time and again that assistance to landmine victims, their rehabilitation and socio-economic integration will continue to be a major challenge for the countries affected by landmines and equally for other States Parties to the Ottawa Convention and for donor community for years to come. In particular, we must be mindful of the fact that child victims need yearly replacement of prosthetic devices, special care and adequate training for long periods of time.

We have good reasons to expect that some countries that have benefited from international assistance on mine action may gradually become net donors by sharing the precious expertise and know how accumulated in South Eastern Europe over the years. I also think that the actual accomplishments and the lessons learned in our region are clearly relevant for other areas that went through similar experiences in the wider Black Sea space, especially in the Southern Caucasus.

We in the Reay Group have been able to build momentum for a functional network involving many actors, both official and non-governmental, at a regional level with good and reliable international connections. The assistance provided by international donors has been prompt and generous. It is important to keep up that positive momentum for follow-up action, to make sure that all the targets of the Ottawa Convention are met adequately and on time in our region. It is in this manner that we shall be able to give substance to our specific contribution to the realization of the noble goal of a mine free world.