

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR MINE AWARENESS AND ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION
4 April 2006**

Landmines are cruel instruments of war. Decades after conflicts have receded, these invisible killers lie silently in the ground, waiting to murder and maim. Through them, 20th century battles claim 21st century victims, with new casualties added every hour.

A single landmine – or even the fear of its presence – can hold an entire community hostage. It can prevent farmers from growing crops, refugees from returning home, even children from playing. It blocks the delivery of humanitarian relief and impedes the deployment of peacekeepers. In post-conflict societies landmines remain one of the greatest impediments to rebuilding and renewal.

Yet this scourge of the past century has the potential to become an early success story of the present one. The swift entry into force of the 1997 convention banning anti-personnel landmines underscored the broad moral condemnation of these weapons. The treaty, which has 150 State Parties, is already producing tangible results. Governments, donors, nongovernmental organizations and the United Nations are collaborating on an unprecedented scale to address this problem, in more than 30 countries. Both the production and the laying of mines are in decline. Global trade in mines has virtually halted. Stockpiles have been destroyed. Clearance operations have accelerated. Mine-risk education has spread.

The message is clear and must be heard: landmines have no place in any civilized society.

The goal of a world without landmines and explosive remnants of war appears achievable in years -- not decades as we used to think. But to realize this ideal, every one of us – donors, the general public and mine-affected countries – must focus our energies, and our imaginations, on the cause of mine clearance. Having been so effective in laying mines, we must now become even better at clearing them. Each mine cleared may mean a life saved. Each mine cleared brings us one step closer to building the conditions for lasting and productive peace.

On this International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, I call on governments to ratify the anti-personnel mine ban treaty as well as the new Protocol V -- on the explosive remnants of war -- to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. I ask donors to renew their financial commitments. I urge the international community to address the humanitarian and developmental impact of cluster-munitions. And I look to affected countries to ensure the rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine survivors, and to increase resources for mine action. Together, we must fight the evil of landmines as a high and moral calling.