2-19-1995

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Prexy Nesbitt

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MOBILIZING AGAINST
THE “HIDDEN KILLERS” AND THEIR LEGACIES

A Talk to the International Committee
of the Red Cross (ICRC) Africa Landmines Seminars
by Prexy Nesbitt

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia • Harare, Zimbabwe
February 19, 1995

Madam Chair, Ms. Doswald-Beck, Mssrs. Bakwesegha and Amare,
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to have been invited by the International Committee of the Red
Cross (ICRC) to address this august gathering and wish to salute the ICRC for the
signal work which they have done on the critical issue of landmines. One not insig-
nificant testimonial, a constant silent legacy, to the seriousness of a subject matter is
the geometrically increasing numbers of persons from humanitarian organizations
who have been killed in the course of working on this critical problem.

Landmines, specifically anti-personnel mines of both the blast and fragmentation
types, have replaced human beings as the consummate combatant. Landmines
are plentiful, cheap—as little as $3 apiece—some say, 25 cents each—and don’t go
AWOL or retire. Landmines are fighters that don’t miss, and as pointed out else-
where, (they) “go on killing long after hostilities are ended.”¹

Estimates vary. But today there are between 85 million and 105 million mines
deployed in the soil of a minimum of 62 countries. Some say that the total numbers
are much higher, perhaps 200 million worldwide.²

It is also crucial to understand that more important than the actual number of
mines is the amount of land that becomes inaccessible due to the presence or per-
ceived presence of mines. One UN demining expert at the recent (February 2, 1995)
National Academy of Sciences seminar on demining in Washington noted that the
projection of mines being present had kept some 25,000 people off the land in one area in Mozambique. When the area was demined, two (2!) actual mines were found.

Africa and the Middle East together have an estimated 60,565,550 mines (or 58% of the global total) scattered in 26 countries. The Southern African countries of Angola and Mozambique both have particularly severe landmine problems. Estimates for Angola range from 9 to 21 million mines; for Mozambique, estimates reach two million. Far more important than the number of mines is knowledge of the mines' location. The 1991 Jornal de Angola recorded that of 330,000 mines laid near Cuito Guanavale, only the location of 80,000 was known. In both the case of Angola and that of Mozambique, almost all regions of the two countries are affected and, given the extent to which villages, schools, clinics, fields, wells, pathways, and markets are mined, it would seem that: 1) civilian populations, rather than being unintended targets, are strategic marks of the contending forces; and 2) beyond being an element of a defensive plan, landmine deployment in various African arenas has served as an offensive weapon, i.e., as an instrument of mass civilian destruction with a notably high toll amongst children and young people.

I am not saying here that the laying of landmines in Africa for the purpose of sealing off a road, hill or area from the enemy is uncommon. On the contrary, in various key African countries, including but not limited to Egypt, the Sudan, Liberia, Angola and Mozambique, roads with landmines and/or roads suspected of being mined may be the single biggest obstacle to development and/or emergency aid. As a recent report on Angola by Helen Long of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation pointed out:

"...Angola has been virtually paralyzed. Most of the roads are known to be, or suspected of being mined, making access to the hinterlands largely impossible. All relief supplies, equipment and personnel have to be
flown daily into the provincial capitals, made all the more hazardous by the presence of defensive minefields laid around all the airports...The air operation in Angola is the most sophisticated—and expensive—in the world. It is an expense the UN admits it cannot afford to continue paying.”

One immediate result of this sealing off of Angola is virtually ending production. It is estimated, for instance, that around Malanje and other key cities now mined, food production is down 25-50%.

There are other results of the proliferation of landmine usage in Africa. For instance, the cost of the historic and present use of landmines to both Angola and the international community is staggering. The United Nations Dept. of Humanitarian Affairs notes that there are close to ½ million Angolan refugees in neighboring countries and 900,00 internally displaced. Experience in Afghanistan and Cambodia indicates that as these populations are re-patriated the mine casualty rate will increase exponentially. This will mean a corresponding increase in Angola’s dependency on some form of outside assistance. The alternative to increased international aid to Angola is too ghastly to contemplate.

There are other results of the proliferation of landmines in Africa. The thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of stock, cattle, goats, and sheep, that are killed directly or killed indirectly through blown up or contaminated waterholes and wells, are another continuing form of killing a nation’s capacity to be productive and increasing that nation’s dependency on the international community. It is no accident that last year the UN sought $2.5 billion in humanitarian aid for 16 countries (the majority of which were in Africa) of which 13 have serious mine problems. Also, note how an inoperative, dependent Angola and Mozambique immediately stymies the viability of any regional Southern African prospects for growth and development!
Human beings, though, rather than territorial imperatives, defense parameters, or tactical maneuvers, are increasingly the first target of landmines. It is all part of the "civilianization" of war, as the Report of the Secretary General on Assistance in Mine Clearance states. Landmine warfare represent a particularly twentieth century horror—a technological testament to the brutalization levels to which this century can sink. As British historian, Eric Hobsbawm noted describing the general case of the growing impersonality of twentieth century warfare:

"The greatest cruelties of our century have been the impersonal cruelties of remote decision, of system and routine, especially when they could be justified as regrettable operational necessities."³

Further elucidating the particularly odious nature of landmine warfare, Nick Bateman of Halo Trust pointed out recently that an antipersonnel (AP) landmine's intention is to maim rather than kill. "You kill a guy with a landmine, he's dead. End of story," explained Bateman. "But you blow his leg off, you tie up a medic for a day, and you demoralize his friends and family for years."

In Africa, thousands upon thousands of young people (under 30)—the very population that is the continent's main producers and workers—have been victimized by landmines. Angola, to cite one stark example, is home to an estimated 70,000⁴ landmine amputees and the numbers of unexploded mines yet underfoot in Angola are enough to allow for nearly two mines for every inhabitant.

Landmines pose a special risk to children (and I personally believe, given my knowledge of the international armaments industry, that many landmines have been and are designed with children in mind). Interestingly, the risk of landmines is elevated for children in Third World-like areas (like Africa) where, given the lack of financial resources, children learn early to press the most mundane and unlikely objects into their service. Thus, as so many demining groups and experts have noted, it becomes a common sight in the Third World’s fields and pathways (where the landmines are widely sown) for children to have live landmines as part of their play and entertainment equipment. Is it merely accidental that so many landmines look like children’s plastic toys?

It strikes me that children victimized by landmines represent a stage of effectiveness beyond that achieved with adult landmine victims. Six to fourteen year-old children landmine victims, by virtue of their youth, are a modality of keeping people living so they can continue dying slowly. Additionally, with adult victims, the suddenness and the trauma of the injury produce a paralyzing emotional numbness. The fact that the victim is a child seems to deepen the numbness. I know few things as emotionally wrenching as being in a roomful of child landmine victims.

"Suddenly the ox exploded. It burst without so much as a moo. In the surrounding grass a rain of chunks and slices fell, as if the fruit and leaves of the ox. Its flesh turned into red butterflies. Its bones were scattered coins. Its horns were caught in some branches swinging to and fro imitating life in the invisibility of the wind. Azarias the little cowherd could not contain his astonishment. Only a moment before he had been admiring the speckled ox Mabata-bata...He surveyed the disaster: the ox pulverised like an echo of silence a shadow of nothingness."
But let me stop. I need not introduce this audience to landmines. This is not a new subject matter for mere discussion and reflection for you here in Africa (as it is for most in my country). Landmines and their vicious legacy constitute part of the reality in which you live.

As most of you know (all too well, perhaps), the experience of a landmine is horrifying. It is devastating to the immediate victim and his or her family. For the victim, the trauma never ends. It is also a shattering disruption for all those close to a victim. Additionally, and this, too, you know intimately, the process of caring for a landmine victim is not easy and the cost very dear. The burden of caring for a victim may irreparably sever and/or destroy social or familial relations. Caring for a landmine victim is beyond the reach of most. And countries with large numbers of landmine victims will see considerable portions of their economies go to aiding landmine victims for years to come. A recent study pointed out that the survivor of a landmine injury requires $3,000 worth of surgery and prosthetics and care. Current projections, given the rates at which children grow, are that in countries like Angola and Mozambique, prostheses for thousands of children will have to be manufactured for the next sixty to seventy years. Further illustration of this hidden aspect of the landmines financial burden is provided in a 1993 ICRC Basic Facts which states that “a prosthesis costs US$125 whilst the average monthly income in affected areas is US$10 to 15.”

Landmine warfare is costly to the entire international community while landmine production is cheap but profitable for a small but significant segment of the international community. The Report of the UN Secretary General on Assistance in Mine Clearance done this past fall asserts that “the more than 100 million landmines currently sown around the world will cost $33 billion to remove them.”
More importantly, recent research indicates that despite some recent successes in limiting the exporting of landmines, the use of landmines continues to outstrip efforts by the international community to clear those already contaminating more than 60 countries around the world. Other new research indicates that the variety of landmines being produced continues to expand, as does the number of producer companies. A recent global survey has revealed that there are about 360 different antipersonnel landmine types being produced by some 100 companies and governmental entities from 55 different countries. New technological developments, e.g., an aerial delivery system that can sow over 1,000 mines in one hour, a broadened range of "scatterable mines," and multiple types of low cost, all-plastic mines, assure that landmining remains a popular and cost-effective mode of combat in the globe's assorted armed conflicts. New findings show that just the wars taking place globally as of 1993 provided a market for landmines sales worth over $500 million over a five-year period.

Stated differently, a December 1994 memorandum by Jody Williams of the VVAF to Roger Walker of World Vision says that "in 1993 the international community allocated about $70 million to clear approximately 100,000 landmines. During the same period, about 2 million more were laid, leaving an annual 'demining deficit' of 1.9 million landmines last year at a cost of an additional $1.4 billion to the aggregate cost of clearing the world's landmines."

Landmines and the lethal heritage from their application have never been limited to one part of the world. Mines can be found in all the world's major regions. Essentially, North America is the only region of the world where mines are not found and Western Europe (including Cyprus, Germany, Malta, and Switzerland) has approximately only 1,300. The current countries most seriously affected by landmines are located largely in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. The list includes but is not limited to:
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The 1994 *Commission on Global Governance Report* states that “between 1945 and 1989 there were 138 wars resulting in some 23 million deaths. All 138 wars were fought in the Third World. 69% of the weapons used in the wars came from the Soviet Union and the USA.” Landmines were widely deployed in all 138 wars. Thus, with the exception of the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia landmines have largely been used against people of color throughout the world. This poses before us a certain racial dimension (with all that that implies) to the historical deployment of landmines.

Additionally, John Keegan’s *History of Warfare* points out that of those who have died since Hiroshima “most have been killed by cheap, mass-produced weapons and small calibre ammunition costing little more than transistor radios and batteries.”

The UN Secretary General’s September 1994 Report reminds us that

“*One of the unique characteristics of the landmine problem is that very few of the States in which conflict has resulted in landmine problem is that very few of the States in which conflict has resulted in landmine contamination produce landmines themselves. More than 85 per cent of all uncleared landmines in those States were and are purchased or transferred from some of the roughly 40 mine-producing States. Thus, an effective moratorium on the transfer of landmines by those mine-producing States could once current stockpiles are depleted, cut the rate of landmine proliferation by 85 per cent.*”

He is saying what Keegan too points out when he says:

(“Those) who have died in war since (9 August 1945) have, for the most part, been killed by cheap, mass-produced weapons and small-calibre
ammunition, costing little more than the transistor radios and dry-cell batteries which have flooded the world in the same period. Because cheap weapons have disrupted life very little in the advanced world, outside the restricted localities where drug-dealing and political terrorism flourish, the populations of the rich states have been slow to recognize the horror that this pollution has brought in its train. Little by little, though, recognition of the horror is gaining ground."

Just as landmines and their deployment have a global character, so too do efforts to ban landmines. Governments, governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the ICRC have worked both separately and together to end the scourge of landmines. The ICRC's contributions have included several key seminars on landmines—Montreux in April 1993, another on military utility in Geneva in January 1994 and this regional seminar today. Also, the ICRC's documentation and lobbying efforts have been critical to the review process now underway to amend the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons and its Protocol II—the Landmines Protocol.

A cursory examination of the current character of the 1980 Convention shows real flaws and weaknesses. Three examples of the limitation are: 1) The convention applies only to international armed conflicts and not to internal strife; 2) There are no mechanisms for verification or sanctions; and 3) it does not regulate landmine production or trade (transfer). Thus, a significant initiative has been that for restriction in the trade of landmines. Mexico and Ireland have formally proposed "a complete ban on the production, stockpiling trade and use of all anti-personnel mines. A greater number of nations propose banning or restricting:

- plastic mines and/or minimum metal mines
- mines lacking self-destruct mechanisms
- remote delivery mines
or some variant on the restriction cited above. The US government is said to favor a voluntary, supplier-oriented control regime that would address production, transfer and stockpiling—but all on a voluntary basis. To me, it is interesting and noteworthy that certain governments are proposing control regimes now that they have sold massive amounts *and/or gone on to other technologies e.g., deep strike mine delivery platforms, and shifted production of the low-cost, tiny, hand-laid anti-personnel mines from developed to developing nations!

Let us look a bit more closely at what I am saying here.

The US-based but multinational (links, e.g., to the Oppenheimer Group) conglomerate, *Alliant Techsystems*—the US Army’s largest munitions contractor—is the group lobbying most for a new regime in which exporting self-destructing and self-neutralizing mines would be permitted. Under such a situation Alliant foresees $½ billion worth of sales of its self-neutralizing scatterable mines over the next several years.

Two other related caveats:

1) We should recall that landmines are often part of a larger lineup of items, munitions, small arms cluster bombs, bomblets, rockets (since the 70s the USA has manufactured 750 million submunitions) and;

2) that the shift in production sources involves the production of the whole assemblage moving towards Third World producers.

A good example of a Third World landmine producer nation is Pakistan. Others in Africa that deserve mention are Egypt, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Researchers Steven Askin and Stephen Goose point out that “Pakistan’s state-owned Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF), founded in 1951 and headquartered in Wah, has

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* Since 1969 the USA has exported at least 4.4 million AP mines—based on the overt records with no precise figures on sales to places like Angola because the information is yet secret.
earned a reputation as one of the most enthusiastic promoters of anti-personnel landmines as well as a wide range of other ordnance, munitions and small arms. Sales literature for the firm's low-cost P4 Mk 2 (unit price US$6.75) stresses the careful calculation of the explosive charge to 'make the man disabled and incapacitate him permanently' because 'operating research has shown that it is better to disable the enemy than kill him'.”

Another critical mobilizing effort has been the International Campaign to Ban Landmines which began in 1992 with a handful of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including Handicap International (France), Human Rights Watch (USA), Medico International (Germany, Mines Advisory Group (UK), Physicians for Human Rights (USA), and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (USA). These six founding organizations have since become the steering committee of an unprecedented political initiative, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines with the VVAF as the coordinator.

Today, the Landmines Campaign consists of approximately 200 NGOs worldwide working together to ban landmines. It is now made up of organized components in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Cambodia, France, Germany, Italy, Mozambique, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. There are also NGOs active in the campaign from other countries such as Costa Rica, India, and South Africa.

Organizations join the campaign based on two key principles: 1) seeking an international ban on the use, production, stockpiling and sale, transfer or export of antipersonnel mines; and 2) the establishment of an international fund, administered by the United Nations, to promote and finance mine victim assistance programs worldwide to which countries responsible for the production and dissemination of
antipersonnel mines would contribute. In short, organizations join on the cogent and unambivalent objectives of:

- no production
- no stockpiling
- no transfer
- no use

It is widely held that NGO mobilization on the issue of landmines has been pivotal to gaining governmental and media attention to the problem. Many of the NGOs in the Campaign have worked closely with their governments toward the formulation of national initiatives to deal with the landmine problem. For example, in October, 1992, the United States government enacted a one-year unilateral moratorium on the exporting of antipersonnel landmines. US legislation most likely would not have been introduced had there not been an NGO coalition to work on the initiative. Other NGOs have formed part of their country delegations in the recent expert meetings to prepare for the September 1995 review conference of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW).

NGOs have also made significant contributions through systematic research about and documentation of the problem of landmines in country reports on Cambodia, Somalia, Mozambique, Angola, Iraqi Kurdistan, El Salvador and Nicaragua and by publishing studies on landmines in general. Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights also produced *Landmines: A Deadly Legacy*, a 537-page report considered to be one of the most comprehensive works on the various aspects of the problem. The WVAF will be releasing just prior to the review conference next fall its *Socio-Economic Report on the Impact of Landmines*, which quantifies the landmine impact through studies of Cambodia, Afghanistan, Mozambique and the former Yugoslavia. The report will examine the consequences of landmine usage in the following basic categories:
1) refugee movement, resettlement and vulnerable population;
2) post-conflict reconstruction and development;
3) medical, rehabilitative and psychological costs;
4) mine clearance and mine awareness;
5) the environment.

The Campaign has also held two international conferences on landmines, the first in London in 1993 and the second in Geneva in 1994. It is planning for its third conference to be held after the 1995 CCW review conference. NGOs worldwide have also been mobilizing at the grassroots levels in their countries. NGOs are key to mobilizing public opinion and making landmines an issue amongst populations at large—both in affected and unaffected regions. The challenge, I think, is to make landmines an issue; to enable that issue “to penetrate the public mind; then to stigmatize and criminalize the producers just as the apartheid state was projected, stigmatized and criminalized! Reaching out to the public, recently Landmine Campaign organizers in Cambodia, in the space of a few months, collected more than 200,000 signatures on a petition calling for a ban on landmines.10

There is already an eddying of concern about the impact which landmines have upon hundreds of thousands of people, both the dead, the living and the future generations. As Professor Anne Goldfield of Harvard editorialized in a June 2, 1994 edition of the Boston Globe,” Momentum is building in support of the international campaign to ban landmines and halt the hidden killers.”

Various governments both national and local have played key roles. On November 11, 1993, Senator Patrick Leahy (Democrat - Vermont), following up on precedent-setting earlier legislation he had introduced in the US Congress, spoke for the US delegation and introduced an resolution to the UN’s 48th General Assembly session urging member states to implement moratoria on the export of antipersonnel land-
mines. Leahy’s initiative is part of a general US strategy that seeks to implement a long-term landmine control regime which would restrict the trade in landmines. One aspect of the US approach is premised on a belief that, given the limitation of the CCW to war issues and other factors, it is necessary to work bilaterally outside the UN system.

The response to this first UN resolution has resulted in a series of initially impressive and resounding national initiatives. Currently, 15 countries have announced comprehensive export moratoria. They include: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovak Republic, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the US. Additionally, the Netherlands and Switzerland have enacted limited moratoria which restrict exports to states that adhere to Protocol II of the CCW; the UK and Russian moratoria cover antipersonnel landmines which do not self-destruct or self-neutralize.

Other countries, too, have put their shoulder to the wheel and taken bold and impressive steps. In June of 1994, the Swedish Parliament voted that Sweden “should declare that an international total ban against antipersonnel mines is the only real solution to the humanitarian problem that the use of mines causes. Sweden should therefore propose solutions in order to achieve such a ban.” The Swedish delegation to the expert sessions preparatory to the review conference subsequently offered an amendment to Protocol II of the CCW which would ban antipersonnel landmines.

On August 2, 1994, Italy, heretofore an aggressive manufacturer and exporter of landmines, in fact, home to the world’s most aggressive producers and exporters, surprised the international community with a Senate motion which ordered the government to immediately ratify Protocol II of the 1980 Convention; to “immediately activate the necessary legal instruments” to launch a moratorium on the export of antipersonnel mines, to cease production of those mines by Italian companies or
companies operating in Italy and support workers in that sector; and to promote
demining in countries contaminated with antipersonnel mines.

Additionally, the government indicated that it “formally undertakes to observe
a unilateral moratorium on the sale of antipersonnel mines to other countries” and “to
ready the necessary instruments for stopping production of such devices by Italian
companies or companies operating on Italian territory.”

The most recent European development of significance has occurred in Bel­
gium. On January 19, 1995, the Belgian Senate proposed a law which would ban the
production, sale, transit and export of antipersonnel mines and it was passed by
unanimous vote by one chamber. Next week, Belgium’s lower house must pass it
before it can become official. At the same time, it was reported by Senator Dardenne
that the Belgian Defense Minister had promised to destroy most of the 340,000 land­
mines it holds in stock and the equipment to lay them. Finally, while it is not a legisla­
tive initiative, it should also be noted that on November 30, 1994, the Dutch Defense
Minister announced before Parliament, the intention of the military to destroy 423,000
antipersonnel and antitank mines at a cost to the Dutch military of some US$5 million.

In September of 1993, the African National Congress of South Africa’s new
national chairman and future vice-president of the Republic, Thabo Mbeki, said that
the future of South Africa’s armament industry would be decided in conjunction with
neighboring countries. In the spring of 1994, after South Africa’s historic elections, the
new Defense Minister, Joe Modise, announced a ban on the marketing and export of
landmines.11

The number and spread of landmines in some parts of the world represent a
horrifying reality. Equally daunting is the enormity of landmine clearance. Both the
locating of landmines and the removal or destroying of them are tedious, labor inten­
sive and extremely dangerous. Thousands of mines laid by aircraft or artillery in an
hour may take years to clear. Currently, despite all the complications, dangers and cost, manual demining continues to be the surest method.

The cost of mine clearance is staggering. The UN places the average cost at between $300 and $1,000 per mine. Most nations in the Third World, where most of the mines are, cannot begin to afford mine clearance programs. If, as recent information indicates, Angola has about 15 million mines in the ground, the conceivable mine clearance costs, allowing for hidden costs, add-ons, and other considerations, might reach as high as $15 billion. Increasingly, mine clearance is an enterprise, not a humanitarian effort. As the July-August 1993 issue of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists noted, “business will get involved if there’s profit to be made in countries such as Kuwait, but they have little interest in no-win, no-profit locales such as Afghanistan” (and Africa). Maybe this is why, according to Human Rights Watch, “major potential donors, such as the US, are almost completely absent from landmine eradication initiatives.”

On the more positive side, NGOs and various international bodies are generally responding in a more and more understanding manner. Recognizing the need for more funding, and for more comprehensive work on the landmine problem the United Nation’s General Assembly (GA) asked the Secretary General to explore the advisability of establishing a multi-purpose voluntary fund for assistance in mine clearance. Such a fund would 1) facilitate assessing mine problems; 2) expedite the disbursement of experts and equipment; 3) initiate an information-gathering base and training programs; and besides giving seed money, would assure continuity in funding when there were delays in the receipt of donors’ contributions (the fund is not intended to replace existing funding in an infested country). By September 1994, the GA had set up the initial framework for the fund. The UN’s (voluntary) Mine Clearance Fund currently has about $67 million and a major donor conference, initiated by both the UN
and the USA, is scheduled for the spring of this year. Clearly, many problematics, however, remain to be cleared up.

I said earlier in this talk that there is little I can say to those of you who live with these “ultimate killers.” A 1993 US. State Department report noting the estimated 30 million mines in 18 of the continent’s countries, called Africa “the most mined region of the world.” Those of you here know far better than those of us from afar the consequences and ramifications of this deadly presence.

There are, though, in these closing moments some questions which I would like to raise and some points I would like to air.

For example, I look through the international list of NGOs working with the campaign to ban landmines and I ask myself “where are my African brothers and sisters”? I look at the growing list of countries which have initiated legislation to prohibit the use and importation of landmines and again I ask, "where, oh where is Africa, my Africa?"

Let me be clear. It is not as if Africa is never heard from. Large numbers of African men and women are amongst the courageous souls risking their lives as they inch-by-deadly-inch remove landmines from the soil. The decision taken by the new South African government is of paramount importance (early hopeful signs are that South Africa may adopt other more decisive measures). Earlier, in a 1993 debate at the United Nations about a resolution on demining, the Sierra Leone representative in a strong speech called for “unequivocal action by the international community to outlaw the production, sale and use of those devices which, by their indiscriminate spread of death and severe maiming have no place in civilized society.” The Sierra Leonean’s words, then and now, make me wonder how many African countries will be in attendance at the upcoming Vienna meeting, how many will join Benin, Niger and Tunisia as parties to the 1980 Convention? How many will join Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria,
Sierra Leone, Sudan and Togo as signatory states? Further, how many, including all these signatory states (and other like the USA), will go on to actually ratify the convention?

It is critical, may I respectfully suggest, that those countries most contaminated by landmine killers add their voice and energy to the international efforts to ban them.

The train has left the station. As the momentum towards change continues to build, it becomes harder and harder to explain the silence of those most impacted. But it is not too late to "get-on-board" for who knows better the horror of trying to re-build after years of conflict in a land saturated with the lethal legacy of landmine killing than those whose wives, mothers, sons and daughters daily walk the shattering pathways of danger, despair and death?

Thank you for your attention to my queries and comments.
Notes to Landmines Speech
for ICRC Conference and Seminar

1 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mines: A Perverse Use of Technology, Switzerland, 1992, p. 4


6 In Afghanistan, with an estimated 10,000,000 landmines, 8,000 civilians either die or are seriously wounded in mine incidents every year. World-wide, there have been an estimated 450,000 maimed and 800,000 killed. Let us remind ourselves of what the medical profile of a landmine victim is like:

Maiunga ________, a 9 year-old Black female, born in the Province of Moxico, Angola, resident of the Kzwola Home, was wounded by an antipersonnel mine resulting in the amputation of her left lower extremity above the knee. The stump has discrete atrophy and feels warm with scars from small wounds created by the prosthesis.

The prosthesis is too short, resulting in a defective gait and poor stability.


9 As quoted from the article “The Market for Anti-Personnel Landmines—A Global Survey” by Steven Askin and Stephen Goose, two of the principal authors of Landmines: A Deadly Legacy, Human Rights Watch, 1993, from which portions of this article are adapted and updated, Jane’s Intelligence Review, September 1994, p. 431.

10 Italy, too, seems to be a place where extremely effective grassroots organizing against landmines has been done. For more on this, contact the various Italian organizations involved or the coordinating office of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.
There are many additional aspects about South Africa’s connections to both mining and mine clearance operations. In the case of Mozambique particularly, the use of some South African and South African-related companies with a long history of laying mines and mines sales for mine clearance activities have raised serious ethical concerns and controversies. Also, there is currently a rich debate going on in South Africa about the general question of the demilitarization of South African society. A good source of information on this is the Weekly Mail and Guardian.


Recall that at current levels of UN funding, i.e., $67 million per year, it will take 1,100 years to rid the world of the landmines currently in the ground—assuming that proliferation has stopped!