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PRESS RELEASE

CANADA'S LANDMARK MINE TREATY 'UNDER THREAT'

Friday December 1st 2017

OTTAWA - The world's largest humanitarian landmine clearance and mine action groups will gather in Canada this Monday (4 Dec) to celebrate 20 years of the historic Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty - but will warn that its vision of a landmine free world is under threat.

Representatives of the groups will join with parliamentarians alongside landmine survivors and Canadian-funded demining staff to discuss how Canada can help re-energise global support for mine action.

The Ottawa Treaty, which bans all anti-personnel mines, is one of Canada's great humanitarian contributions to global peace and security. Thanks to the Treaty, more than two dozen states are now completely cleared of mines and over 51 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed since 1997.

But 60 million people are still threatened by landmines and unexploded bombs worldwide and on-going conflicts in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere have created a new 'landmine emergency', which is causing death and injury and hindering humanitarian and stabilisation efforts.

Meanwhile development opportunities and food security in countries such as Angola, Cambodia and Zimbabwe are being undermined by millions of mines left over from conflicts that ended decades ago.

States party to the Ottawa Treaty have set a deadline of 2025 to clear remaining mine contamination. But a global decline in funding for

mine action has brought this deadline under threat and risks undermining the vision endorsed by the Treaty's 162 signatory states.

Paul Hannon, Executive Director of Mines Action Canada said:

'Twenty years ago, Canada took a stand against an indiscriminate weapon that continues to claim civilian lives decades after conflicts have ended. But today the vision of a landmine free world is looking increasingly fragile. For just \$36m a year – or \$1 per citizen – Canada could again support all the pillars of mine action and show the world it is committed to finishing the job it started in 1997'

Major General James Cowan, CEO of the HALO Trust said:

'Clearing mines is an urgent humanitarian imperative. It saves lives and provides access for aid during conflict; it helps people come home and access vital services in the immediate aftermath of conflict and it releases formerly contaminated land for agriculture and development in the long term. To commit to mine action is therefore to commit to reducing poverty and securing peace and stability.'

Dr Jane Cocking, CEO of The Mines Advisory Group said:

'The victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used by armed groups in the Middle East today are classed as landmines by the Ottawa Treaty. These heinous weapons are powerful enough to destroy a car yet sensitive enough to be set off by a child's footstep. Twenty years ago Canada stood up for mine victims around the world. Today we have a new landmine emergency and we need to respond to it. As we have demonstrated in countries like Mozambique, this is not an insurmountable problem.'

Jerome Bobin, Executive Director of Handicap International Canada said:

“For landmine survivors, promises are not enough. They know how much cost prosthesis, physiotherapy services or the demining of a land, a road or a school yard... But above all, they know what it saves: broken lives, tragedies and mutilated futures. The question is not to know if it is worth to keep on mobilizing, 20 years after the Ottawa Treaty, but which States will dare to move from talking to acting.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Organisations participating in events in Ottawa include The HALO Trust, the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Mines Action Canada (MAC), the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), Handicap International Canada, the Canadian Landmine Foundation, ^[1]the Canadian Red Cross^[2] and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
2. A media briefing by representatives from some of these organisations will be held at **09.30 in the Charles Lynch Room, Centre Block in the parliamentary buildings on Monday 4 December.**
3. **A half-day conference (Unfinished Business: The Ottawa Treaty at 20) addressing how mine action facilitates development, empowers women and tackles IED contamination will be held at the Westin Hotel, 11 Colonel By Dr, ON K1N 9HA from 11:30 until 5:30pm on Monday 4 December. All representatives are available for interview, alongside a mine injury survivor and senior female demining staff from Colombia and Sri Lanka respectively.**
3. The Ottawa Treaty is formally known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and is named after the city where it was agreed and signed. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its work in bringing about the Treaty.
4. In 2016, Canada committed \$ 17.5m for mine action in Colombia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, and Sri Lanka. This is half of what its contribution in the decade after the treaty was signed.
5. Landmine Free 2025 is a joint campaign run by The HALO Trust and MAG, to reenergise support to landmine clearance and ensure people affected

by landmines are not forgotten. This campaign is a call to action to work together to do more, and faster. www.landminefree2025.org