



Statement by Ambassador Donald K. Steinberg
Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for
Global Humanitarian Demining
United Nations General Assembly
November 28, 2000

Mr. President. The United States is pleased once again to co-sponsor the resolution on assistance in mine action. The 70 million landmines planted in one-third of the world's nations pose a threat not only to individuals -- 300,000 of whom are disabled from landmine accidents -- but also to peace, democracy, and national reconciliation. They prevent refugees and displaced persons from returning to their homes long after the guns go silent, and they hinder transition from relief to recovery and development. This is why my Government is strongly committed to mobilizing resources needed to achieve a mine-safe world by the year 2010 -- a goal we are facilitating under President Clinton's Demining 2010 Initiative.

Since President Clinton spoke from this podium against the terror of landmines in 1994, our Government has dedicated about \$400 million to humanitarian mine action, and we will provide approximately \$100 million more in the year 2001. This is a significant contribution, but no government, international agency, or private group on its own can make more than a small dent on the problem. We must work together.

This year, the United States is working with more than three dozen nations to demine the most dangerous minefields, train humanitarian deminers, and teach children and their parents to identify and avoid these weapons. These programs take place in all parts of the world, with our largest programs having been in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Mozambique, Angola, Cambodia, Rwanda, Laos, and Central America. We are using the best scientific talents in the United States to identify new techniques for mine detection and clearance. The Patrick J. Leahy War Victims fund -- named in honor of one of our nation's heroes in the fight against landmines -- and other agencies are providing prosthetic devices as well as medical, vocational and psychological assistance for survivors of landmine accidents in a dozen countries.

Success in the fight against landmines is not measured, however, in numbers of programs initiated or even in the number of mines lifted from the soil, but in the impact on the lives of people in mine-affected countries. Here, there are real victories. Cambodia has cut its landmine accident rate from 500 per month in 1992 to 50 per month now, still too many but a significant improvement. In Afghanistan, despite continuing instability, tens of thousands of hectares of previously mined farmlands have been put back into cultivation. In Mozambique, the clearance of thousands miles of roads has allowed hundreds of thousands refugees and displaced persons to return to

their homes. It is gratifying to watch how quickly people resume their lives and regain their dignity after being informed that their villages and fields and schools are mine-safe. Rwanda, Namibia and Central America are also making great strides in eliminating minefields

We are proud to work with the UN system to achieve these results. We salute the activities taken by the UN Mine Action Service, as well as the vital contributions of the UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS and WHO. We are also helping to strengthen mine action centers abroad, support the groundbreaking efforts of the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining and James Madison University, creating with the European Union and others a network of facilities to assess promising demining technologies, and enlisting the 44 nations of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council on new humanitarian demining.

An exciting development has been the creation of public-private partnerships to address this global tragedy. For example, the UN Association of the USA is working with the UN and the UN Foundation on the "Adopt a Minefield" program, which generates private contributions to demine the 100 worst minefields in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cambodia, Croatia and Mozambique. The Survey Action Center is producing with the UN Foundation mine surveys of a dozen countries to help plan new strategies. DC Comics has created more than 1 million mine-awareness comic books for the children of Bosnia, Central America and Kosovo. The Marshall Legacy Institute and Humpty Dumpty Institute are purchasing, training and deploying mine-detecting dogs throughout the world. Wheelchairs for the World is helping increase mobility of disabled people in dozens of countries. These actions reflect the best humanitarian instincts to address the tragedy of landmines, one mine and one person at a time.

On a related front, the United States welcomes the international commitment to protect civilians around the world from landmines embodied in the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). We salute the Governments, international organizations and civic groups under the International Campaign to Ban Landmines that moved the dream of a mine-safe world closer to a reality.

For our part, since 1996, the United States has destroyed 3.3 million landmines. In 1997, President Clinton permanently banned the export or transfer of anti-personnel landmines, and we are seeking to universalize this ban in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. In 1999, the United States adhered to the second amended Mines Protocol to the CCW, which contains key restrictions on landmine use. We will end the use of all anti-personnel landmines outside of Korea by 2003. We are actively seeking alternatives to landmines, and we will adhere to the Treaty by 2006 if we find and deploy these alternatives.

I know that many around the United States and around the world would have us take a different course on the Ottawa Treaty. Still, this disagreement must not deter us from our common vision of eliminating the threat of landmines around the world by the year 2010. Working together, we can meet this challenge. We owe the next generation of world citizens nothing less than the right to walk the earth without fear. Thank you.