

Check against delivery



**ICRC**

**International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in  
Mine Action**

International Committee of the Red Cross  
Statement delivered by Vincent Ochilet, Deputy Head of Delegation

Addis Ababa, 04<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Mr. Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is honoured to be associated with this important event. Speaking for myself, I would like to express my great pleasure at being here with you on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

This occasion gives us an opportunity to take stock of recent progress in eradicating anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive devices from past conflicts throughout the world. More importantly, it reminds us of the deadly legacy of these weapons and the challenges that lie ahead.

There have been a number of impressive achievements in the last 15 years. Data on clearance of mines and other explosive remnants of war, stockpile destruction, risk education activities, victim assistance and casualty rates provide proof of undeniable progress in eliminating these weapons and the threats they pose to civilians. However, much hard work remains to be done before the ultimate goal of a world free of landmines and explosive remnants of war can be realized. In many countries, clearing the ground of weapons and destroying stockpiles will not be the end of the matter: there is also the necessity of ensuring appropriate, long-term assistance for the victims of these weapons.

The ICRC has been witnessing – for several decades now – the devastation wreaked by mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war on individuals, families and communities in Africa and elsewhere. In many of the contexts where the ICRC works, mines and other explosive devices are concentrated in agricultural and grazing lands, irrigation systems, residential areas and roads. The impact on civilians is severe: besides the physical and psychological sufferings that follow, there are economic and social costs to be reckoned with.

At present, the ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are working in 27 weapon-contaminated regions to reduce the suffering caused by landmines and similar explosive devices. These efforts include: provision of technical and capacity-building support to help States survey and clear areas affected; risk reduction activities aimed at preventing accidents; alleviating the effects of weapon

contamination on communities affected; and provision of support for medical care and rehabilitation services for survivors. In situations of urgent humanitarian concern, or when such capacity is unavailable, the ICRC can carry out clearance activities, as it did in Libya, Iraq, Côte d'Ivoire and the Republic of Congo.

Landmines and other weapons that inflict suffering on civilians are a problem that cannot be solved by any individual organization; it requires the joint efforts of political and military authorities, international and national organizations, civil society and donor countries.

The African Union Commission and the ICRC organized a workshop last month on the issue of weapons contamination in Africa. Experts – from 23 AU member States, and from the ICRC, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, the demining training centre in Benin and donor countries – were able to share experiences and expertise and tackle obstacles to ridding Africa of these weapons. They also discussed the various challenges that AU member States face in discharging their clearance obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We believe that the practical measures formulated at the workshop will help to speed up clearance operations in African countries.

On this occasion – the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action – the ICRC would like to pay tribute to the thousands of people throughout the world who are involved in clearance operations, in risk education activities and in providing assistance to victims. They do extraordinary work.

The ICRC remains committed to participating in joint efforts aimed at lessening and, ultimately, eliminating both the suffering caused by landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive devices from past conflicts and their socio-economic impact.

I thank you