

# GENEVA CALL NEWSLETTER



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Geneva Call is celebrating its 5th anniversary. What a distance covered since March 2000! At that time, the idea to engage armed Non-State Actors (NSAs) was considered utopian, unrealistic, even politically dangerous, yet today we see that it has proven possible to engage armed groups, to persuade them to renounce the use of antipersonnel mines and to work with them on mine action programmes. This was recognised by many States in the First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction, which underlined their support of the work undertaken (see our report on the conference, below).

Responding to the impetus taken on by the "Deed of Commitment", Geneva Call's International Secretariat now is composed of six people, who work assisted by several PHD students. Its Paris office also counts two staff. Geneva Call is increasingly working in partnership with local organisations, and is currently carrying out nine programmes with ICBL national campaigns.

At the start of the year, Geneva Call modified its legal structure, allowing for closer scrutiny by the Swiss authorities. It now belongs to the small group of strategic partners of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Its Governing Council has been strengthened with new members, and will be supported by an advisory committee from all the continents.

In five years, Geneva Call has helped pioneer a new type of engagement, showing the importance of dealing with NSAs, and showing that negotiations with NSAs does not alter their legal status. Antipersonnel landmines terrorise the civilians living in their shadow, and it is the removal of this threat to life and limb which remains Geneva Call's yardstick. When this threat is attenuated or eliminated, thanks to the commitment taken by NSAs, Geneva Call feels that its humanitarian objective is reaching a measure of success.

## WEB SITE UPDATED!

Geneva Call has revamped its website, with sections in Spanish and in Arabic. Geneva Call and the Deed of Commitment explained, and resources online.

[www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org)

## ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES: UNIQUE ARMED GROUPS MEETING

In November 2004, as States were getting ready to attend the First Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty in Nairobi, Geneva Call, in collaboration with the Program for the Study of International Organization(s) of the Graduate Institute of International Studies and the Armed Groups Project, organized a parallel meeting for NSAs, in Geneva.

The objectives of this First Meeting of the Signatories of Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment were to:

- better understand why non-signatory groups have not yet adhered to the mine ban;
- identify the challenges that signatory groups faced in implementing and in monitoring compliance of their obligations under the Deed of Commitment;
- create a forum for best practices to be shared and learned;
- explore the arguments for and against Geneva Call expanding its mandate to other humanitarian norms;
- analyse the links that exist between mine action and peace negotiations, from the perspective of groups that are parties to a conflict and beneficiaries of mine action programmes, as well as from the perspective of organisations that are involved in building peace and in building mine action programmes.

During the three-day event, representatives from signatory groups and prospective signatory groups from more than 22 countries, as well as humanitarian actors, academics, diplomats and mine action practitioners,



[Photo]

The spirit of the Conference: two NSA leaders, a diplomat, an academic and a Geneva Call representative.

From left to right: Siraj Barzani, Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government, David Spence, European Commission, Dr. Daniel Warner, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Dr. Zani Abdullah, Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front and Elisabeth Reusse-Decrey, Geneva Call.

had a unique opportunity to meet, exchange views and review Geneva Call's work. The representatives of the NSAs were particularly pleased to have, for the first time, the opportunity to express their opinions in an international forum and of sharing their experiences with similar groups. A report of the conference will soon be available at the web site:

[www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org)

#### RESEARCH ON THE ROLE OF NSAS IN THE USE OF LANDMINES

*During 2004, Geneva call undertook a first systematic investigation of the use of landmines by NSAs. The findings, presented in the report "The Involvement of Armed Non-State Actors in the Landmine Problem: A Call for Action" shows that while only a handful of States used landmines during 2003-2004, no less than 60 NSAs in 21 countries made use of hand-made or factory-made mines during the same period. The report clearly shows the importance of engaging NSAs in the landmine ban. It also pinpoints regional and NSA-specific variations in mine use, which deserve further investigation.*

<http://www.genevacall.org/resources/publications.htm>

## THE NAIROBI SUMMIT ON A MINE-FREE WORLD

1) Geneva Call participated in the *First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction* in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004, sharing ideas and experiences with various NGOs, government delegations and representatives of inter-governmental organisations. Supported by several campaign members of the NSA Working Group of the ICBL, it strongly advocated the need to engage NSAs in the mine ban. Geneva Call took the floor in the plenary, pointing out that "a mine free world will be reached only if all the users of mines are invited and supported to cease using mines". Thirty States mentioned the problem of mine use by NSAs in their statements, of which six underlined the challenging work done by Geneva Call. In addition, two inter-governmental organisations, the European Union and the African Union, insisted on this question, as did the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the ICBL.

2) During the Summit, Geneva Call hosted a side-event to inform the mine ban community about the First Meeting of the Signatories of Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment, held in Geneva on 1-2 November 2004 (see "UNIQUE ARMED GROUPS MEETING" above) as well as from a report of the general trends of current landmine use by NSAs (see box "RESEARCH ON THE ROLE OF NSAS IN THE USE OF LANDMINES").

3) Geneva Call also organised a meeting at the Somali Aid Coordination Body to report on the findings

of its recent mission to Somalia as part of the follow-up of the mine ban commitments signed under Geneva Call by 16 Somali factions in November 2002 (see Geneva Call Newsletter Vol. 2 - N°2, Nov. 2004, on <http://www.genevacall.org/newsletters/newsletters.htm>) Participants attending included the mission members (Swiss Foundation for Mine Action and Danish Demining Group), UNDP, UNICEF, ICRC, Handicap International, Somali NGOs, the European Commission, donor countries and the media. The mission report was widely distributed and aroused a keen interest, as this had been the first international mission to come and make a country-wide assessment of the landmine situation since 1994. The mission clearly showed the urgent need to launch mine action programmes (full report: <http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-15sep04-somalia.pdf>)

4) Geneva Call met with the delegations of the Government of Colombia led by Vice-President Francisco Santos, and the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A, in order to exchange views on their respective situations. In Sudan, the landmine ban contributed to building confidence among both Parties, which had agreed on a common mine action strategic framework and had started a joint process of mine clearance, while in Colombia, discussions on the issue were only just beginning. It is important for the various actors to learn from previous successful experiences.

Geneva Call has been working in partnership with the Colombian Campaign Against Landmines (CCCM) since December 2003. Five recent activities are highlighted here:

1) Three regional forums about “Landmines, Non State Actors and Humanitarian Agreements” took place since October 2004 in Meta, in Caldas and in Choco, one of the regions with the highest incidence of landmines in Colombia. Various actors intervened during these forums, such as representatives of the government, civil society, local NGOs and victims. Participants discussed possible solutions to the problem of the manufacture and use of landmines by NSAs - FARC, ELN, EPL and several paramilitary groups. These meetings also allow victims of landmines to express their strong opposition and to raise awareness of their plight.

2) Geneva Call maintained direct contact with ELN, especially through Francisco Galan, its Commissioner for peace. In October, Geneva Call met Galan in jail in Itagui, Antioquia and discussed activities against landmines in areas in which the ELN operates.

3) In Micohumado, a pilot zone for application of humanitarian demining agreements with the ELN, the



guerrilla demined a 15-kilometre stretch of road last January. This was the first humanitarian demining involving an NSA in the country's history.

4) Geneva Call and the CCCM visited Micohumado in January 2005, responding to the Community invitation, just after the demining. They were accompanied by representatives from UNDP, UNICEF, the regional church, the Peace and Development Program of Magdalena Medio and, last but not least, the Observatorio de Minas de la Vicepresidencia de Colombia. It was the first time from the beginning of the process that representatives from Colombian government came to Micohumado. During this visit, Geneva Call was requested by the local community to coordinate an international verification on the demined area by ELN. Despite its many efforts since then, and despite the support of the UNDP and UNICEF, Geneva Call has not been able to obtain the authorisation from the Colombian government for international verification.

5) The governor of Antioquia province decreed the launch of the Humanitarian Commission of Antioquia after the proposals by Geneva Call and the CCCM, to approach the question of landmines and NSAs and to negotiate humanitarian agreements, in the province. Geneva Call is the only international organization, member of this commission. This is a very important step, as the Government had always refused to allow local humanitarian agreements with the armed groups.

GC/CCCM MISSION TO SPAIN,  
FRANCE AND BELGIUM

*In September - October 2004, Geneva Call together with The Colombian Campaign Against Landmines for Colombia, visited various European cities to sensitize the international community and the expatriate Colombians about the landmines, humanitarian agreements, and Non State Actors.*

PHILIPPINES

Geneva Call's January mission explored how it could more effectively support and monitor the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's (MILF's) commitment to a mine ban; met with one of its signatory groups, the Revolutionary Worker's Party of Mindanao (RPM-M); and gathered information about the peace process between the Government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

The MILF reiterated its firm commitment in complying with, and implementing, the Deed of Commitment which had been signed in 2002. Several areas were

identified where Geneva Call could further assist the MILF by: facilitating the establishment of a GRP-MILF joint mine/UXO clearance project, supporting the creation of a rapid response monitoring mechanism for verifying alleged mine use by the MILF, and organising International Humanitarian Law training for MILF cadres.

Geneva Call explored how best to pursue these three requests through discussions with the Philippine delegation of the ICRC, the International Monitoring Team (IMT) and other organisations, including the Bantay Ceasefire and the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies. Several of the local organisations expressed an interest in being more actively involved through partnering with Geneva Call or receiving training which would increase their capacity to work on these issues more effectively.

With the assistance of Mr. Quijano, Chair of the GRP peace panel for negotiations with the RPM-M, as well as Mr. "Kaloy" Manlupig, Head of the Independent Secretariat to the Peace Process between the GRP and the RPM-M and also member of Balay Mindanaw, Geneva Call was able to meet with a representative of the RPM-M. He confirmed the RPM-M's firm commitment to the ban on antipersonnel mines. Further discussions are hoped for in the near future.

Though making it very clear that the Philippines was not a mine affected country, Secretary Teresita Deles, Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process along with the Chairmen of the GRP peace panels for negotiations with the MILF, NDFP and RPM-M, were very interested and supportive of Geneva Call's work in the Philippines, and expressed a keen interest in pursuing a joint UXO clearance project with the MILF, promising to include it in the agenda of the next peace talks to be held shortly in Kuala Lumpur. The Swiss Ambassador to the Philippines strongly supported the mission and provided invaluable assistance.



[Photo] Geneva Call staff with members of the MILF, after a meeting with their leaders.

## LAUNCH OF THE SOMALIA COALITION TO BAN LANDMINES (SOCBAL)

Together with its local partner, the Institute for Practical Research and Training (IPRT), Geneva Call invited a dozen of selected Somali NGOs and community-based groups in Hargeisa in November 2004 to facilitate the launch of a national campaign against landmines. An interim board was elected for a period of six months. Within this time, the statutes of SOCBAL will be drafted and submitted for approval to member organisations at a general assembly to be called in Somalia. Many NGOs expressed interest in joining SOCBAL, which is open to any NGO which adheres to its principles and objectives and meets its membership criteria.

The launch of SOCBAL is the realisation of one of the recommendations made by the Geneva Call field mission to Somalia in September 2004 (report of the mission is available at <http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-15sep04-somalia.pdf>).

It is crucial that civil society participates in the campaign against land-mines and in the follow up of the mine ban commitments by the factions.”

### MINE BAN ADVOCACY IN BURUNDI

In December 2004, Geneva Call was invited to co-sponsor a series of advocacy workshops organised by the Independent Centre of Research and Initiative for Dialogue (CIRID) and the Burundi Campaign to Ban Landmines in follow up of the Nairobi Summit. Geneva Call participated in these workshops, which were opened in Bujumbura and continued at grass roots level in five mine-affected regions. They aimed at raising public awareness on the landmine problem and the mine ban commitments made by the government under the Ottawa Treaty and the former rebel movement CNDD-FDD under the Deed of Commitment. Participants included local authorities, civil society, media and international stakeholders (UNOB, UNMAS, UNICEF, UNDP, ICRC, FSD, Halo Trust, etc).



### PROMOTING THE MINE BAN IN SOMALIA

*In December 2004, a Somali delegation led by the Prime Minister of the newly established Transitional Federal Government (TFG), Ali Mohamed Gedi, attended the Nairobi Summit. Mr Gedi declared the TFG's intention to accede to the MBT in 2005, in continuity with the signing of the Deed of Commitment by most of the current TFG members in November 2002.*

*In January 2005, further to preliminary meetings held in 2004, the Juba Valley Alliance (JVA) signed the Deed of Commitment. Although JVA is part of the TFG, its commitment is important as this alliance still controls its militia and a large area in southern Somalia. The signing was witnessed by signatory leader Eng. Hussein Aideed, now TFG Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. With JVA commitment, almost all key factions in Somalia (except those headed by Qanyare Afrax and Muse Suudi Yalaxow) have signed the Deed of Commitment.*



[Photo: Geneva Call] Somalia

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