



Geneva, 3 August 2006

Geneva Call Statement at the 24th Session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations

Dear Chairman, distinguished delegates,

Thank you for giving me the floor. I would like to congratulate you Chairman for your election to lead this working group.

My name is Katherine Kramer and I represent Geneva Call. We would like to emphasise the need for a new comprehensive study on the impact of landmines on indigenous people, but first let me give some background.

Geneva Call is a humanitarian organisation working in different countries affected by armed conflict. Our mandate is to engage armed non-State actors in a landmine ban by enabling them to sign a Deed of Commitment that parallels the commitment made by States under the Ottawa Convention. To date, 30 non-State Actors have signed the Deed of Commitment, of which several represent indigenous people and ethnic minorities.

In our work worldwide, we have come across many instances where indigenous people are affected by landmines. A preliminary mapping has found that indigenous peoples' land in 22 countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America may be contaminated by mines.

The impact of landmines on indigenous people and lands are severe. In addition to indigenous people being maimed, killed and psychologically depressed as a result of landmines;

- Thousands of acres of indigenous lands, territories, and resources are abandoned because they are in mine affected areas, displacing thousands of indigenous peoples and preventing their safe return; and,
- Due to landmines laid in their lands, territories and resources, indigenous peoples can no longer perform their rituals or have access to their sacred places (cultural impact), cultivate their lands (economic impact), and have to move to new places where they can not properly study, practice or perform their customs and traditions.

Geneva Call is deeply concerned by the neglect of the national and international community on this issue as it affects indigenous people.

Therefore, we would like to strongly recommend the Working Group make a comprehensive study on the impact of landmines on indigenous people, with particular respect to human right to life, freedom of movement, economic, social and cultural rights including but not limited to the right to health and see that the report will be freely available to all as a UN official document.

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We also would like to see the Working Group call on all States that have not signed the Ottawa Convention to ratify or accede without delay and to call on all armed non-State actors to sign the Deed of Commitment under Geneva Call for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action.

We would like to emphasise that a ban on anti-personnel mines in indigenous peoples land and territory shall contribute to demining and victim assistance. It shall also contribute to economic development, social progress, and peace by fostering understanding and friendly relations among nations and peoples of the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your attention.