

## Canada Marks Progress on Mine Action in Afghanistan

OTTAWA, December 3, 2008 The Honourable Beverley J. Oda, Minister of International Cooperation, today marked the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Convention on the Prohibition on the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and Their Destruction*, known as the Ottawa Convention, highlighting Canada's role in the progress to demine Afghanistan and other mine-affected countries.

"We can be proud of Canada's leadership role to make Afghanistan safer for all Afghans," said Minister Oda. "Our efforts to demine Afghan communities will not only save lives but will help lift people out of poverty, allowing families to farm and develop their land without risk."

Canada has been a long-time supporter of mine action activities in countries such as Afghanistan, Lebanon, Angola, Iraq, Cambodia, and Sudan. In Afghanistan, Canadians work closely with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan and the Government of Afghanistan to survey, clear and release land, provide mine risk education, and assist victims of landmine tragedies, especially in high-risk communities with high numbers of casualties.

The Canadian government's most recent Quarterly Report indicated that from March 2007 to March 2008, 180 km<sup>2</sup> of land was released to communities as a result of surveying and clearing anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war.

With Canadian support, 8.3 million Afghans have benefited from mine risk activities, such as the mine risk education activities that are included as part of the school curriculum from grades one to twelve. New radio broadcasts being aired will increase the number of communities that hear mine awareness messages.

Canada is a leading donor for demining activities in Afghanistan. This funding is a major reason why within Afghanistan all known stockpiles of anti-personnel mines have been destroyed and the number of mine victims in Afghanistan has declined by 19 percent from last year. Canada will continue work with the Government of Afghanistan to help Afghanistan reach the Mine Ban Treaty goal to clear all mines.

As well, today the Government signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo, which prohibits the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable humanitarian harm. Over time, it will save the lives of many thousands of people around the world and will help to end the use of a weapon that has devastating effects on civilians.

For more information on demining activities in Afghanistan, visit the [Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan](#) Web site. Additional information on demining activities in Afghanistan and globally is available on the [Electronic Mine Information Network](#) Web site. High-resolution photos of de-mining activities are available for publication. Image previews are available at <http://tinyurl.com/atf-gta> and requests for publication-suitable files should be directed to [afc-am-cameraf@international.gc.ca](mailto:afc-am-cameraf@international.gc.ca).

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