

Speech Sample

For many of us the first memory of the landmine issue was in early 1997 when Princess Diana put on the demining outfit and took the issue from the editorial pages to page 1. In fact, government and non-government organisations had been grappling with the issue for many years. It is a fascinating story. As with any issue, however, it is the human face that is so compelling:

On April 10th, 2000, a 11-year-old girl named Ema Alic and two of her friends were playing in a field north of Sarajevo and they were killed by an antipersonnel landmine. It's tragic when young lives are cut short. It's tragic that they died while they were playing. And it's tragic that Ema didn't die immediately, she suffered for some time. And the people of the area stood on the edge of the field unable to offer aid or comfort - because the children were in a minefield. But what is more than tragic is that the landmine that killed those children was put into the ground as part of a military conflict that ended 5 years before the tragedy occurred.

When wars end the surviving soldiers take their weapons and go home - not so anti-personnel landmines, they stay in the ground. They are ready; they are waiting. They don't know the difference between war and peace. They don't know the difference between the footsteps of a soldier and the footsteps of a child. They don't wear out.

We're an amazing species - the human being. We have such capacity for generosity and we have such capacity for mischief. Surely it was the latter that was at play when we developed 344 different ways to make anti-personnel landmines: there are mines that are triggered by pressure, there are landmines that are triggered by a trip-wire. We have even developed landmines that can be shovelled out of truck or pushed out of plane: when they hit the ground they don't explode - they arm.

There are even landmines disguised to look like children's toys. On October 21st 2000, 5 children were killed in Pakistan by a landmine that looked like a butterfly. Pakistan wasn't even part of the conflict that caused that mine to be placed - it was between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. It was pushed out of Soviet plane, the wind caught it and propelled it over the border into the hills of Pakistan where it sat waiting for those children 10 years after the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the front-line international aid organisations, Handicap International and the International Committee of the Red Cross began to wonder about the high number of civilian landmine casualties and began to lobby governments and to say that this was a weapon unlike any other - and that this weapon should be removed from the world arsenal. Mine action advocacy groups were created in a number of countries. Later a number of these NGOs, or non-government organisations, joined together to form the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. International conferences began.

Those who are familiar with international law will know that the development process is long and frustrating and that law is formulated over a prolonged period of time. This was the way the landmine discussion was flowing: then, at the end of a conference in Ottawa in October 1996, Lloyd Axworthy, Canada's then Foreign Minister, changed the way international law is formulated. He challenged those present to return to Ottawa in December of 1997, some 14 months off, and sign a comprehensive treaty banning landmines. The NGOs were delighted but the countries, even those that supported a mine ban were shocked: this was not the way international treaties were negotiated. Then Mr. Axworthy went one step further, he

said that Canada would sign such a treaty even if it was the only signature on the page. What followed was a rapid fire series of meetings around the globe that led to Ottawa in December of 1997. This approach is now being applied to other international issues and is known as the Ottawa Process.

The timeline set by Mr. Axworthy was achieved. When the parties met in Ottawa on December 3rd 1997, they had developed a comprehensive agreement to ban the production, use and transfer of antipersonnel landmines and on the destruction of existing stockpiles. Canada was not the only signature on the page - in fact 122 countries signed the document on that day.

The next step in international law is ratification. What this means is that you take your intention and make it law. Canada ratified the treaty on the day it signed - meaning that it was legal to make landmines in Canada on December 2nd and on December 3rd it was a criminal act.

40 Ratifications are required to become international law - that happened in March 1999. It was the most rapidly negotiated treaty in history and the most rapidly ratified treaty in history. To date 143 of the 191 countries in the world have ratified the Ottawa Treaty and another 9 have signed but not yet ratified. That means that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the countries of the world have made a legal commitment to repudiate this weapon.

Let me put this progress in real terms - before the Ottawa Treaty 34 countries traded in anti-personnel landmines today no country is known to be trading. Even countries that have not signed are respecting the no-trade approach. The United States has a ban on trade in place; four other countries including Russia have a moratorium in place; China has issued strong policy statements against trade. Trade has been virtually eliminated.

One of the attractive things about this issue is the simplicity of its solution. You remove landmines from the international arsenal and create a finite number; you remove that finite number from the ground.

The Canadian Landmine Foundation has been working since 1999 to raise awareness and funds for humanitarian demining. One of the original purposes in setting up the Foundation was to provide an opportunity for individual Canadians to participate in this important international initiative by Canada. One of the Foundation's activities that has had considerable success is called Night of A Thousand Dinners. The Foundation now operates as a managing partner in the global Adopt-A-Minefield Campaign, with partners in the USA, the UK and Sweden.

Tonight, you are joining with people from 50 countries around the world in one of our oldest rituals: breaking bread together. Through Night of Thousand Dinners we are all joining together in this way in the interest of peace. Night of a Thousand Dinners (N1KD) was developed to encourage people all over the world to come together on a single night, enjoy a meal and take action toward eliminating landmines. A simple concept - gathering with friends and family and building a global community to support a common cause - N1KD has energized tens of thousand of caring citizens and has grown into an international phenomenon. Since its inception in 2001 nearly 3000 dinners, held in 50 countries, have raised over \$3.5 million. The list of projects posted on the website is truly impressive; including demining and survivor assistance in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Mozambique and Vietnam.

The Foundation has been speaking to service clubs, churches, community organisations, private foundations and individuals to generate the financial support necessary to assist those people in cleaning up their countries.

Let me skip to the end of the book and tell you how this comes out. At the end of the chapter on landmines in our human history it will say that every country signed the treaty: production stopped, stockpiles were destroyed. It will also say that every single one of these dreadful things was removed from the ground and that landmines then went the way of myth and legend. This is going to happen. That is not in question. The only thing we are talking about is time: how long is it going to take. The amount of time required is influenced by two things: effort and money.

The hard fact is that somewhere in the world someone is killed or mutilated by a landmine every twenty-eight minutes. In some countries fifty percent of victims are children. We must do something about this. We must do something about this quickly so that the next generation of world citizens can walk without fear.