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NEW KING LAUNCHES GLOBAL LANDMINE REPORT

(17 November 2004: Phnom Penh, Cambodia). Cambodia's new King, Norodom Sihamoni today hosted the first of three global launches of the 2004 Landmine Monitor Report, an initiative of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). At the Centre of the Dove, a vocational training school for people with disabilities near Phnom Penh, King Sihamoni reminded all that "actions against landmines require commitment, dedication and patience to achieve the eradication of this cruel form of warfare from our world."

The event was attended by hundreds of disabled people, school children, politicians, ambassadors, and representatives of non government organizations working to assist mine victims and clear mined land in Cambodia. Landmine survivor and ICBL Ambassador Tun Channareth thanked King Sihamoni for listening to the disabled and encouraging Cambodians to help them.

Cambodia is one of the worst landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) affected countries in the world due to almost three decades of conflict. In 2003, 772 new landmine and UXO casualties were reported, including 115 people killed and 657 injured. In the first six months of 2004, 671 new mine/UXO casualties were recorded, showing the first upward trend in many years. Organized mine clearance operations in Cambodia began in 1992 and since then a surface area of about 252 square kilometers has been cleared. The Royal Government of Cambodia established the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority in September 2000 to take responsibility for coordination of all mine action activities in Cambodia.

The event in Cambodia focused on assistance to landmine victims. The Landmine Monitor Report 2004 was also launched today in Maputo, Mozambique focusing on mine action, and at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium focusing on mine ban policy.

According to the new 1,300-page report by the ICBL, the number of new mine victims each year has decreased markedly in the majority of mine-affected countries, since the international treaty prohibiting antipersonnel landmines took effect five years ago.

The ICBL's *Landmine Monitor Report 2004* identified 8,065 new casualties globally caused by landmines and UXO in 2003, compared to 8,333 in 2002. However, many casualties go unreported and Landmine Monitor estimates there are now between 15,000 and 20,000 new casualties annually around the world—far fewer than the 26,000 per year estimated in the 1990s.

"The declining landmine casualty rate is heartening, but there are still an appalling number of people, especially children, killed and maimed by landmines every year in virtually every region of the world," said Sheree Bailey of Handicap International, Landmine Monitor's Victim Assistance Research Coordinator. "The stark reality is that there is an ever-growing number of mine survivors in the world and in the vast majority of mine-affected countries, neither the national governments nor international donors are doing nearly enough to provide for their needs," she added.

According to Landmine Monitor, in 2003, new landmine and UXO casualties were recorded in 65 countries. A total of 86 percent of reported new casualties were identified as civilians and 23 percent were children.

Landmine Monitor estimates that there are somewhere between 300,000 and 400,000 mine survivors in at least 121 countries today. In Cambodia alone, more than 41,000 mine survivors have been recorded since 1979.

The major progress in the past five years in preventing antipersonnel mines from being laid and in clearing existing minefields has not been matched in the area of victim assistance. Landmine Monitor reports that while global mine action funding has increased greatly since 1999, identifiable resources for mine victim assistance have actually declined with resources for victim assistance as a percentage of total mine action funding decreasing significantly and steadily since 1999.

“In many mine-affected countries, including in Cambodia, the assistance available to rehabilitate and reintegrate landmine survivors back into society remains desperately inadequate,” said Ms. Bailey. “If governments are serious in their commitment to assist survivors, funding for healthcare and the disability sector must be significantly increased and sustained over the long-term,” she added.

On 1 March 1999, the historic 1997 Mine Ban Treaty entered into force with unprecedented speed and it is now in effect in 143 countries. It prohibits the use, production, trade and stockpiling of antipersonnel mines, and requires destruction of mines in the ground within ten years. The treaty also obligates, in Article 6.3, that “Each State in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims....”

Landmine Monitor Report 2004: Toward a Mine-Free World is the sixth annual report by the ICBL. It contains information on landmine use, production, trade, stockpiling, demining, casualties and victim assistance in every country of the world. This year’s 1,300-page report is a special edition covering the past five years, in anticipation of the first five-year Review Conference for the Mine Ban Treaty. On Monday, 29 November, the ICBL will present the report to diplomats attending the review conference in Kenya, known as the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World.

Cambodian landmine campaigners heading for the Nairobi Summit will be calling for more concrete actions from governments. The Summit aims to take stock of the success and failures of governments towards the eradication of landmines and assisting victims. HE Excellencies Sok An and Executive director of the Cambodia Mine Action Authority Sam Sotha, will be representing the Cambodian government in Nairobi.

The full Landmine Monitor report and related documents are available online from 00:01 GMT on 18 November at www.icbl.org/lm/2004.

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For more information on the International Campaign to Ban Landmines please refer to www.icbl.org

For more information on the Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines please refer to www.jrscambodia.org