I n a major step forward for both the peace process in Angola and for the struggle to eliminate landmines globally, the Angolan government, on 5 July 2002, ratified the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-

Personnel Landmines and on Their Destruction. The Convention will enter into force for Angola on 1 January 2003. Although there have been no reports of use since the signing of this Agreement, landmines continue to claim victims. Angola is one of the most mine-affected countries in the world - with anti-personnel (AP) mines, anti-vehicle mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) threatening an estimated 75% of the population. One in every 415 Angolans already has a mine-related injury. In 2001 alone, it is estimated that 660 persons were either killed or seriously injured by AP mines.

The ratification by Angola and the 2 May 2002 accession of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) means that all 14 member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are now State Parties to the Convention and that SADC is the first regional organisation to have (at least symbolically) achieved the aim of a Mine-Free Zone. As of 25 September 2002, 49 countries in Africa are now party to the convention.

The Convention prohibits the manufacture, stockpiling, transfer and use of all types of anti-personnel landmines.

In addition, each State is required to enact domestic legislation to “prevent and suppress any activity prohibited” by the treaty, to clear emplaced mines, destroy existing stocks and to provide programmes that address the socio-economic re-integration of survivors of landmine incidents.

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**ANGOLA: Peace Process Kickstarts**

**Noel Stott**

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**National Focal Points Report Progress at Nairobi Ministerial Review Meeting but Challenges Remain**

**Thokozani Thusi**

The recognition of the magnitude of the problem and threats posed by small arms on security and development in the sub-regions of East Africa and the Horn led to the signing of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa in March 2000. The Declaration, which was signed by ten countries, aims to address the problem of small arms and light weapons proliferation in the two sub-regions through a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy that involves the improvement of national laws and regulations governing the manufacture, trade, acquisition, possession and use of small arms, promoting weapons collection and destruction programmes, capacity building for border control and law enforcement, public awareness and combating illicit arms trafficking.

The Declaration envisages intra and inter-governmental cooperation, government and civil society collaboration and the use of regional law enforcement agencies, such as the East Africa Police Chiefs Coordinating Committee (EAPCCO). In order to deal with issues of capacity building and resource shortage the Declaration provides for partnerships with the donor community so as to ensure sustainable funding of various projects on small arms controls.

The first Ministerial Review Meeting of the Nairobi Declaration took place in Kenya in August 2002. The two-day meeting was organised by the Nairobi Secretariat and included representatives from the regional governments and the African Union. The meeting aimed to assess progress made since the signing of the Declaration. Signatories to the Declaration made presentations to the meeting regarding institutional and operational initiatives undertaken to implement provisions set out in the Agenda for Action.

Progress was reported in setting up national focal points. More than half of the signatory states, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Sudan stated that they had established focal points. However, although this should be viewed as a positive step, the meeting noted with concern the lack of adherence to proper and standard guidelines in formulating national focal points.

Most focal points lack the necessary resources and capacity to implement their obligations. There is still a need to solicit the necessary resources to enable states to harmonise firearms legislation, develop standard training curricula for law enforcement agencies, improve control over legal stocks of weapons and destroy obsolete stocks, promote public awareness programmes and improve coordination between regional bodies such as EAPCCO and the Nairobi Secretariat.

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Commitment to Eliminate Landmines

countries are in the process of developing legal measures that will impose penal sanctions on violators. These countries include SADC members: Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Swaziland.

 Appropriately in June 2002, the First Conference of SADC Demining Operators was held in Luanda. During the Conference, the 7th Meeting of the SADC Mine Action Committee also took place. It was attended by representatives of Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the SADC Secretariat.

The Angolan government has also begun to restructure its national mine action sector and on 28 July 2002 a new National Intersectoral Commission on Demining and Humanitarian Assistance (CNIDAH) was established.

Two problems affect these significant gains:

■ There has been a decrease in international donor support - from approximately US$13 million in 2000 to US$9.6 million in 2001. This has meant that almost all NGOs operating in Angola have experienced a lack of donor funds in 2001. NGOs operating in Angola, include: Halo Trust; Handicap International (France); Handicap International (Belgium); Intersos; Menschem gegen Minen (MGM); Mines Advisory Group (MAG); Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAF). Also present are UN agencies, UNDP, UNICEF and OCHA, as well as local NGOs such as LARDEF, ANDA and ASASP. MAG, in an effort to better utilise scarce resources has called on donors to co-ordinate their funding for mine-action with their aid for other emergency activities.

■ Another major issue of concern is that 75% of mine victims in Angola are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). An estimated 4.28 million people are displaced inside Angola. This is thus a major concern as thousands of IDPs are spontaneously return to their places of origin or finding new areas to settle in. In addition, refugees from both Zambia and the DRC are already streaming into the most mined province, Moxico Province. Not only are many areas mined or suspected of being littered with mines and other UXOs, but mined roads are also hampering aid programmes.

Article 4 of the Norms on the Resettlement of Displaced Persons represents an important means to prevent new casualties amongst IDPs:

■ All resettlement and return sites must be verified free of mines;
■ Mine-awareness programmes need to be initiated and where necessary areas demined;
■ The government will verify and certify the security of the resettlement area;
■ Humanitarian organisations may also be invited to assess the security conditions of the return site.

The Angolan government's political commitment to the peace process and the practical steps that it has taken since April 2002 shows that it has the capacity to play a major role in eliminating mines from its soil and to help the SADC region in realising its dream of being mine-free.