



Press Release

Geneva, 24 September 2004

Norwegian Royals visit Geneva International Centre For Humanitarian Demining

Their Royal Highnesses, Crown Prince Haakon and Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway today visited the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The occasion was part of an overall visit to Geneva-based humanitarian agencies, and was organized by a consortium of Norwegian non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In welcoming the Royal couple to the GICHD, the Director of the Centre, Ambassador Stephan Nellen noted “the significant role played by Norway in addressing the global landmine crisis over the past ten years. Norway has provided funding to the GICHD to promote the aims of the anti-personnel mine ban convention, and also to support practical activities, such as improving the use of mine detecting dogs or searching for better ways to use machines to clear mines”. Nellen also said that he was “particularly pleased to host Their Royal Highnesses, as they were the first State visitors to the Centre since he assumed the Directorship in mid-August 2004”. The Royal couple were briefed on the work of the Centre, and then took part in a display of mine risk education activities, practical demining tools and information management technologies.

Norway has been a leading participant in the fight against landmines over the past decade. The final negotiations leading to the adoption of the ban on anti-personnel landmines were held in Oslo in 1997, and Norway has continued to support the global efforts against landmines, both politically and financially.

Landmines affect over 60 countries in the world, a legacy of past or ongoing conflicts. Many of these, such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Iraq and Mozambique are severely affected, and the landmines pose an enormous humanitarian and development problem. The GICHD was established in 1998 with the aim of providing practical assistance to these countries affected by landmines. Activities of the Centre include providing technical advice, developing standards, undertaking evaluations and conducting training on a wide range of topics. In addition, the Centre has developed and distributes the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), a computer system that assists planning, conducting and reporting of demining operations in the field. Finally, the GICHD undertakes applied research in such diverse topics as developing legislation and improving safety awareness campaigns, through to exploring better ways to detect and destroy landmines. The Centre also has a role to provide support to the various international treaties prohibiting the use of anti-personnel landmines.

For further information, please contact :

Ian Mansfield, Operations Director

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining - GICHD

Phone : 022 906 16 74

Mobile : 079 337 98 09

i.mansfield@gichd.ch

Background information on the GICHD can be found at **www.gichd.ch**