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"Special on LANDMINES"

Landmines are weapons that kill indiscriminately – long after a war has ended.

Can the production, use, and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines be eliminated forever? What progress has been made on clearing mines and unexploded bombs already in the ground in many countries? With other security threats stealing headlines around the world, will the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World help maintain focus on the landmine issue as a battle that can be won?

These are some of the questions explored in this special edition of World Chronicle focusing on landmines. Guests are Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, the President of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World, and Martin Barber, the Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service.

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Can the production, use, and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines be eliminated forever? What progress has been made on clearing mines and unexploded bombs already in the ground in many countries? These are some of the questions we'll be discussing today in the company of two experts on landmines:

Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria –the *President of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World*… and Martin Barber, the *Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service*.

Gentlemen, welcome to **World Chronicle**.

Ambassador Petritsch… I'd like to start with you. Looking at this data, it seems to me that the issue of landmines is one of those rare issues in security issues, where the United Nations is having quite considerable success. Would you like to talk a bit about … I'm sure you'd like talk about the successes.

PETRITSCH: Absolutely, I think this is indeed, Tony, as you say one of the big success stories, one of the rare big success stories, I might add. Over the past five years since the Ottawa treaty is in force one hundred forty-three states have joined this landmine ban treaty, banning the use, the production, the transfer of landmines altogether.

JENKINS: Five years ago there were about forty-five signatories, I think something like that….

PETRITSCH: It started out in the double digits.. in the low double digits but it really developed over time and this is still ongoing while we speak so to say..

JENKINS: And this is just not success on paper. We are seeing success in the field?

PETRITSCH: That is definitely the case because once you join you have some pretty heavy obligations to fulfill, as I've mentioned, it is an elimination of one kind of a weapon altogether. This is the important thing that is happening here. We've over the past couple of years, five years to be precise, destroyed more than thirty-seven million stock-piled landmines and one hundred and twenty six states are now free of landmines altogether and that is, I believe, really it merits the expression "success".

JENKINS: The number of victims each year has dropped quite dramatically.

PETRITSCH: Consequently the number of victims has dropped. We still have about fifteen to twenty thousand new victims each year and it's far too much still. But the numbers are dramatically down. Trade is out basically, production is down……

JENKINS: There were thirty-four countries that traded in landmines five years ago, today there are how many? None.

PETRITSCH: Trade? There is practically zero now. There is no legal trade ongoing and that I believe is due to the fact that the norm of the treaty has spread well beyond the membership. That, I believe, is the very important story.. additional story that you really have an effect that transcends the membership of one hundred and forty-three.

JENKINS: Five years ago though, I think, there were about nineteen or twenty countries that were actively using landmines. What's the number now? Do you know?

PETRITSCH: The numbers are down, also dramatically, of course when you look at some of the conflicts like in Chechnya. There we know that the landmines on both sides, both from the Russian Army as well as from the rebels are being used. Unfortunately, this is a very unfortunate thing but the landmine movement is, of course, also about convincing those states who have not yet joined to join and to eliminate this terrible weapon altogether.

JENKINS: But, Martin Barber, it's not all a success story. There are still some ….there is still ground to be made up, there are still gaps that you'd like to plug, I would say. Would you like to talk about some of that?

BARBER: Sure. There's a lot of work still to be done. And I would say there's probably work to be done in three broad areas. First, there's work to convince the remaining countries to join the ban so that it becomes really universal, that every country is on board. Secondly, the destruction of stock-piled landmines and mines that are already in the ground, the clearance of landmines. A lot of progress is already being made but in countries like Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia the task of clearing the mined land will take a number of more years…

JENKINS: Do we have a number or figure of how many mines there are still to be yanked out of the ground?

BARBER: You know, we don't know how many mines there are

in the ground. All we can begin to calculate is how many communities are affected by landmines.

JENKINS: That's an interesting issue and we're going to get into it in a moment but I should say we're having this conversation on the Eve of the Nairobi Conference. Wolfgang Petritsch, is the object of this conference to plug some of these gaps that Martin is talking about? What are you intending to do at the conference?

PETRITSCH: Definitely, now due to the large impact that the landmine treaty had over the past five years, we of course now are very much motivated to get the job done. This is one of the few world issues that indeed can be tackled and brought to a good end. And I think we now need to reinvigorate and reinforce this and impress this upon a wider public, upon the governments as well as upon those who are directly affected by it, civil society, the UN system, of course, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICBL, representing civil society in this field. These are the main actors and they together with the states, parties and all those who want to contribute to bring to a positive end this they need to now say "OK, the next five years are going to be crucial."

JENKINS: So do you see this as analogous to polio eradication where we've been told that with one last big shove in Africa we can eliminate polio? Do you see it as analogous to that?

PETRITSCH: Well, in a way this is a very good example, you know, where you do not stop mid-way, where you really go all the way. I think this is the important message that should come out from Nairobi. This is a job that can be done but we really need to do our job, so to speak, and recommit ourselves, get the necessary political and above all financial and resource commitments from both the donor countries as well as from the directly affected countries. In a way, it is very important that the directly affected countries tell us what they really want to do. They need to have a plan, they need to be politically committed and then, I believe, others, those who are interested in, who have the money will follow suit.

JENKINS: That's interesting Martin because five years ago when the treaty came into force this issue was quite sexy if I can use that word to describe something that's so dastardly. Mainly, Princess Diana, from Britain

helped make it a topic of conversation around the world, helped attract attention. She's gone now. Has some of the interest dissipated as a result of that? Do you need something to help regenerate things? The Ambassador was just talking about how the countries that are affected need to reach out and explain to people why they need help. Can they do as an effective a job as Princess Diana?

BARBER: I think that once we have the decision behind the treaty, the decision to go ahead and do it, it moves into the individual countries. We still have some very high profile personalities involved. Paul McCartney is a big supporter. Queen Noor of Jordan is a big supporter. At Nairobi, she will host a Survivors Summit at which victims of landmines will come and pass a declaration because one of the other pieces of seriously unfinished business is support for the reintegration into society of people who have been injured by landmines. So what we call victim assistance is a major plank of our work and we have to see that they get the support that they need to become fully integrated again into society.

JENKINS: So in practical terms what does that mean? Does that mean you're going to go to Nairobi and say to people "It's time you started investing money in prosthetics, it's time that you spend money training people who've been victims of landmines so that they can find some sort of profitable way to make a living?"

BARBER: Yes, I think Nairobi provides and opportunity to showcase some good examples, where, in specific countries there have been great projects that have provided landmines victims with work opportunities. It's great that we're going to Nairobi at a time when a Kenyan woman has just won the Noble Peace Prize on environmental issues, and remember that landmines are a problem of the environment. Landmines pollute the environment, prevent people from using their land, prevent people, children from walking to school safely. So I think Nairobi provides an opportunity to show the world what we can do to bring victims back into the mainstream of society and how we can help affected states to clear the land and remove the obstacles from development that are currently preventing …….

JENKINS: Your timing is perfect because you talk about the victims and we actually have a piece of tape that I think your office produced, that is designed to remind our viewers of who the victims or potential victims are, let's

have a look at it….

1ST VIDEO ROLL-IN

AUDIO IN: " Landmines are…

AUDIO OUT: …NATSOT EXPLOSION (Video fades)

VIDEO OUT

JENKINS: Very effective. I'm told actually that that was produced by Showtime with help from the United Nations. Those images [are] from Cambodia, a country that's been plagued by landmines for decades. How close are we to seeing Cambodia being a success story, to being able to say that the worst of the landmines, the worst of the landmine problem has been resolved there? And do we have a figure on how much it's going to cost to resolve this? And say, let's say the three largest countries that suffer from this problem which, I believe, are Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia?

BARBER: Cambodia recently added a millennium development goal, which was that they are challenging themselves to reach the point of zero new victims so that there will be no more victims of landmines by not later than 2012.

JENKINS: Is that overly ambitious? You think they can do it?

BARBER: It's not overly ambitious. It's ambitious. They can do it if they get the support they need.

JENKINS: OK, so what are we talking about in terms of support? How much money are we looking for?

BARBER: You know each government will come… is bringing to Nairobi a plan with their individual requirements and illustrating what they are putting into the problem. And Cambodia is one of the countries, which has really taken on board the landmine eradication issue as a national development priority. And I think that's a good example for other seriously mine affected countries. It has to be integrated into national development priorities. Then the money can come from a variety of sources. The money can come from the World Bank.

The World Bank is much more interested now in participating in mine action, in helping mine affected states to meet their obligations under the treaty. And so we'll see money coming from a variety of sources. It's difficult to put a price tag on the whole thing. But, it's expensive. We are going to need a lot of money. So that's why Nairobi is a good opportunity to show everybody what's possible.

JENKINS: Ambassador Petritsch, I suspect the reason that the IMF might be interested in helping fund some of these programs is because the landmines don't just affect the victims who get blown up, killed and maimed. There are other knock on effects that perhaps our audience out there are often aren't aware of. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

PETRITSCH: Yes. Of course, the whole movement started out as a humanitarian movement, so to speak, to take care of the victims as, so to speak, the start of all this. But then over time one of course realized, first of all, it's very much about disarming, so to speak, but it is about development.

JENKINS: Explain that.

PETRITSCH: That means as long countries like Afghanistan or Cambodia or Bosnia-Herzegovina in Europe are as mined as they are, it is not going to be a meaningful investment, there's not going to be a meaningful economic development possible particularly in the developing countries you have large portions of the population living in rural areas. And these are the most affected. How are you going to go back and feed these people from their own soil if in the soil you find too many landmines? That is where the nexus between humanitarian side/ disarmament side and the development aspect becomes very, very clear.

JENKINS: Obviously one of the immediate effects, and I guess it's what you are alluding to, is that people who know that their fields are mined are not going to go and farm those fields and therefore they are going to suffer hunger, dislocation. It's not just that foreign investors won't come in, they simply can't plant their own crops.

PETRITSCH: Absolutely, the most basic preconditions for a normal life are not in place unless you do something about landmines in these mine affected countries and, of course, to put financial figures on this is very difficult, as Martin has explained, and they vary a lot, for example, in Afghanistan just to deal with the high impact areas you will need one hundred million US

dollars over a period of five to seven years. However, there are other countries like Yemen where with a few million dollars the job could be done. The same applies to Zambia. So you see this is a whole array, a whole variety of situations that we need to take into consideration. The idea for Nairobi, of course, is to get a sort of a global approach as a basis for national and regional approaches that need to be taken. The structuring of the whole problem will make it much easier also for donor countries to decide where to get engaged or where to continue to be engaged.

JENKINS: The rational for it.. the logic of it seems to me to be unassailable, but of course there are some states, several states that have still not signed onto the treaty, crucially, the three biggest members, permanent members of the Security Council, China, Russia and the United States. The United States has actually said that their program, their way of dealing with the landmine issue is superior to the methodology that's being adopted in the treaty. As I understand it, they're saying that they will continue to produce landmines but only landmines that will self-destruct after a limited period of time. Is that a valid approach?

BARBER: First of all I should say that the United States has been the single most generous donor to the clearance of landmines around the world and almost all the programmes in which we're involved United States is providing resources for the clearance of landmines or the assistance to victims.

JENKINS: It's also the single biggest producer of new mines? Isn't it?

BARBER: Well, the United States has adopted a policy that would allow them to produce, as you say, mines which either self-destruct or self-deactivate or both. Now these mines are obviously more expensive and there have to be questions about their total reliability.

JENKINS: Do you have any figures? Are they unreliable?

BARBER: We have no experience of working with these landmines, which are new generation in real life situations, so we can't say whether they are going to be unreliable or not but really that's not the point.

JENKINS: What is the point then?

BARBER: The point is that all NATO countries apart from the United States have decided that they can secure their military objectives without

using landmines. And so our view is that the antipersonnel mine is not a required weapon of the modern military.

JENKINS: But the Americans….

BARBER: A hundred and forty-three countries have said they don't require this weapon any more.

JENKINS: Yeah, but the Americans have pointed out that there are not many places around the world that face the sort of situation that they face in Korea, for example, where they have a massive army the other side of the border in North Korea, and that having the landmines there is actually a way of staving off war and therefore might be a way of preventing casualties. Why does that argument not work with you?

BARBER: Because the landmine is a weapon that is victim activated. It's not a weapon that goes off when the commander pulls the trigger. Many armies that have used landmines found that they are more dangerous to their own troops than they are to the enemy. If you surround your position with a mine field and then the enemy breaches the mine field and comes at you your own escape may be prevented by mine fields. But much the most important thing is that mine fields are not systematically removed or lifted when armies move and retreat or advance. And the result is that you have a victim-activated weapon, which is lying in the ground for years and years. Now if you make that victim-activated weapon self-destructing or self-deactivating you may, if it works a hundred percent of the time, eliminate that risk. But the United States is able to deploy a technology at many times the cost of the cheapest landmines, which is not within the grasp of other countries at the present time.

JENKINS: All right. Let's take a look at another piece of video tape which is being produced for the Nairobi Conference. Let's see what it says…

2ND VIDEO ROLL-IN

VIDEO IN: Slate : 2002 Volleyball Championship

VIDEO OUT: Slate: 2004 Nairobi Summit for A Mine-Free World

VIDEO OUT

JENKINS: Well I think that was another effort to remind people

again of the victims of this weapon. What is the tactic that you are using … that you are going to be deploying at this conference, Ambassador, to put pressure on these hold outs? Are you going to try to shame them? Perhaps you might want to talk about the European example I was reading about this yesterday. It seems to me quite interesting because, if I'm not mistaken, there are only three European states that haven't signed onto the treaty yet. It looks like two, Poland, I believe and Lithuania are about to sign on….

BARBER: Latvia..

JENKINS: Latvia, sorry. That leaves just Finland which is rather extraordinary, one thinks of Finland as being one of the most advanced countries on earth. Why are they still holdouts? Do you think that the fact that the rest of Europe has signed on is going to be something that you can use, a lever that you can use to persuade Finland to go the same way?

PETRITSCH: While that definitely is a very powerful leverage that most of the European Union countries have joined, countries like Greece, for example, in your conflict in the past with Turkey, both countries have joined only recently. There's a measure of confidence building. Divided Cyprus has joined in a unilateral way, so to speak, to demonstrate and to de-mine - "We want peace with our neighbour." And I think this very strong message is going to impress others who have not yet joined. And again a very beneficial side effect of the preparations for Nairobi is that many countries, you have just mentioned a few and there are many more, are now seriously considering joining, have made up plans for their own country and are preparing themselves for the time after the use of landmines or after the possession of landmines, rather I would say. So this kind of peer pressure that exists in the European Union is definitely very positive and will also serve as an example for other continents and other regions of the world. By working together you can achieve the desired goal.

JENKINS: The Finnish reason, rational for keeping landmines is pretty much the same as the Americans which is that they used to have this boarder, land boarder with the Soviet Union, massively armed Soviet Union, they saw it as one of the few ways to deter a Soviet invasion. If they can be persuaded by the sort of peer pressure to give up their landmines does that then knock out the blocks from underneath the American argument?

PETRITSCH: Well the situation, of course, for Finland has

dramatically changed since the Soviet Union does not exist any longer and indeed we need to appreciate that also, so to speak, the collective consciousness of the people and the past conflict of course, very much impressed the Finnish citizens. But now we are in the twenty-first century, the Soviet Union is gone, this enemy, so to speak, is not any longer, so therefore they should move closer much faster. And this is what they are actually doing in fact. There is a split opinion in Finland, a large part of the population and the political parties in support of joining the landmine treaty immediately and others who are still opposing it. And even there it is a very, very strong still quite divisive discussion but they are moving forward. They have now identified the date in the next coming years to be joining. They are now, of course, reconsidering, and I'm quite optimistic that by seeing examples, what happens when you in fact join, that this will help convince those states who have not yet joined to join. This is of course what we call "universallization". Only then once we've all the states on board nobody is going to threaten the neighbour with landmines any longer.

JENKINS: That's a nice goal. Martin, I believe that you were one of those strange coincidences of life, I suppose. You were giving a press conference in Baghdad on the danger of unexploded bombs, precisely the moment when the bomb went off. You were in the building when the bomb went off in Baghdad that took the lives of Sergio Vieira de Mello and more than twenty other members of the United Nations staff. What did you take away from that experience?

BARBER: Well, it's true. The previous day I'd been talking to Sergio Vieira de Mello and I told him that I'd come to look at this problem of the massive abandonment of explosive ordinance around Iraq and see what we could help to do about it. And I asked him what messages he would like to give at the Press Conference that I would be giving the following day.

JENKINS: And his message was?

BARBER: He said there are two things you should say. The first is, you should express the great sympathy of the United Nations for the pollution of Iraq by all types of weapons and the second thing you should say is you should express confidence in the ability of the Iraqi people to help themselves to clean up this mess. Now of course it was the supreme irony that the bomb was

made up of explosive remnants of war, just the very material that I had been talking about moments before in the Press Conference. But I think the message that Sergio wanted to transmit, and that, of course, got lost in the aftermath of the event, is a very important one and it really reinforces something that the Ambassador was saying. We have to have confidence in the ability of the mine-affected states, the states which are polluted by this contamination, to deal with the issue themselves, but with our support.

JENKINS: Well, I'm afraid we're out of time. It seems to me that's a perfect message to end on. Thank you so much Martin Barber, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch. Our guests have been Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch -- *President of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World* and Martin Barber, *Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service.*

I'm Tony Jenkins. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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