

Humanitarian Demining Organizations Seek Private Sector Technological Support

PRESS RELEASE



THE BUSINESS
HUMANITARIAN
FORUM

Geneva International Centre for
Humanitarian Demining
Centre International de
Démunage Humanitaire - Genève



24 September 2002, Geneva ? At a workshop held in Geneva on September 23rd, a major effort was launched to seek private sector initiatives to find improved ways to detect and remove the millions of landmines still buried in many countries around the globe. The workshop, sponsored jointly by the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the Business Humanitarian Forum, gathered together over 40 representatives of the business community, experts in humanitarian demining and senior governmental and humanitarian officials to discuss how best to bring a wider range of private sector research and development efforts to focus on the continuing problem of landmines.

Workshop attendees were addressed in the evening of the 23rd by M. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the GICHD and former President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, a long-time campaigner against the use of landmines. He called attention to the continuing plight of landmine victims and the need for the private sector to become more aware of the necessity to assist them to reintegrate into economic life. He also emphasized the need for a wider research and development effort to discover new and better ways to detect and clear mines, noting that "there has not really been a true break-through yet." He further pointed out that new technologies, particularly in the information technology sector, could be helpful to save lives.

Participants in the workshop provided ideas and guidance to launch a campaign over the next 12 to 24 months to approach selected businesses with the objective of refocusing some of their research and development capacities to the task of improving demining technologies. This effort will be conducted by the Business Humanitarian Forum with the expert advice of the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining. An intensive effort will be made, based on the initiatives suggested in the workshop, to build a much higher level of business interest in helping with the very difficult task of finding and removing landmines, as well as the even more serious problem of how to manage the life-long social and economic problems associated with the victims of landmines.