



Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

PRESIDENT OF THE FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE

Opening of the week of meetings of the Standing Committees

13 June 2005

H.E. Wolfgang Petritsch
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations

and

President of the First Review Conference

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues and Friends:

Allow me to welcome you to our first gathering since the landmark Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World this past December 2004.

The Nairobi Summit – our First Review Conference – was such a success that most would have expected something of a let-down after it.

Fortunately, this has not been the case.

The Nairobi Summit certainly was a celebration of our success and an outstanding example of effective multilateralism at work.

However, more than anything, it was about our commitment to overcome the challenges that remain.

I trust we will see manifestations of that commitment during the next couple of days.

In this regard, I am sure that the most frequently used word this week will be **action**. However, it is important not only to speak about action, but to take action!

In Nairobi, we institutionalized action as a central feature of the Convention for the next five years.

This Convention, after all, does not simply prohibit or regulate behavior. Rather, it obliges us to take action in a positive sense to end the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines – for all people, for all time.

And it compels us to act with urgency. Thus, it is not by chance that the words “as soon as possible” have been inserted into Articles 4, 5 and 7 of the Convention.

In Nairobi, we emphasized this sense of urgency: We adopted the Nairobi Action Plan, agreeing to 70 actions that will ensure continued and necessary progress in universalization, stockpile destruction, mine clearance and victim assistance.

I am pleased that the Co-Chairs have developed programmes which are consistent with the Nairobi Action Plan. This makes good sense: We have an action plan. Now, we have to live up to it and implement it.

In this spirit, Austria as the current presidency of the Convention and Croatia as the designated presidency have forwarded to you some ideas to ensure the focus of the next Meeting of the States Parties in Zagreb: that is to say to emphasize progress made in the implementation of the Nairobi Action Plan and challenges that remain in its application.

I look forward to discussing these ideas with you – both informally during the course of the week, and, during the Friday afternoon session of the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention.

Dear Friends and colleagues, as we do have a lot of work to do, let me express my confidence that we will have fruitful and constructive meetings in the days ahead in line with the Convention’s usual spirit of openness, inclusiveness and transparency.

I would now like to give the floor to Ambassador Stephan Nellen, Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

Thank you for your attention.