

STATEMENT

BY

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ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**FOURTH MEETING OF THE
STATES PARTIES TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION
(Geneva, 16-20 September 2002)**

GENEVA, 17 SEPTEMBER 2002

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Mr. Chairman,

1. It is a great pleasure for me to see you in this important office as Chairman of this Fourth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. Giving your strong devotions to the fight against anti-personnel landmines, I am confident that you will guide us through this Fourth Meeting in an excellent way, and I can assure you of our full support in fulfilling this important task.

Mr. Chairman,

2. I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union - Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia – and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey have expressed the wish to align themselves with this statement. The EFTA country Liechtenstein, which is a member of the European Economic Area, endorses this statement.

3. I am delighted that the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines now, as of September 2002, has 126 States that have ratified or acceded to the Convention and an additional 18 States that have signed but not ratified it. Since the last meeting of States Parties in Geneva in September 2000, more than 20 States have acceded to the Convention, and others have undertaken to do so in the near future. Accession of such a large number of countries leaves no doubt that an international norm has been established that can be no longer ignored. Regrettably, this does not mean that our task has been accomplished yet. More needs to be done to reach out to the whole international community. The European Union remains strongly committed to promote a global eradication of anti-personnel mines. Therefore, the European Union will continue to campaign for a universal and swift application of the Convention. There are still 51 States that have not yet acceded to the Convention.

4. To that end, the European Union has carried out more than 50 demarches. Among them, some of the biggest and most populated

countries in the world, within which huge stocks of anti-personnel mines are still stored, have been approached. The European Union has urged non-signatories to accede to the Convention without delay and has called on them to attend this meeting of States Parties. In this regard, the European Union applauds the regional steps taken by other States Parties to promote the universality of the Convention and urges States Parties continuously to approach non-signatories.

Mr. Chairman,

5. On behalf of the European Union I would like to commend the Republic of Angola for being the most recent ratifying State of the Ottawa Convention. The European Union welcomes this significant step by Angola and stresses the importance that all countries in this particular region of Africa now have acceded to the Convention. Furthermore, I am pleased to learn that Afghanistan, one of the most mine-affected countries in the world, on 13 September 2002 deposited its instrument of accession to the Ottawa Convention. The European Union commends this important step that seems pivotal in the bolstering of the economy and the reconstruction of the Afghan society. Finally, Mr. Chairman, I was happy to hear from your statement yesterday, that both the Comoros and the Central African Republic have indicated their intent to accede to the Ottawa Convention.

6. The success of the Ottawa Convention however should not solely be measured in terms of the number of States that have acceded to it. Since its entry into force, trade in anti-personnel mines has diminished considerably and production has decreased appreciably. More than 75 States Parties have either completed the destruction of their stocks or did not possess stockpiles when the Convention entered into force. In total more than 26 million anti-personnel mines have been destroyed since 1997. Similarly, the number of victims in the countries most affected is constantly decreasing. World wide, increasing financial aid is being granted each year for the purpose of mine clearance, victim support and awareness raising. In 2001, more than USD 230 million was granted for these purposes.

7. Despite this outstanding progress, more needs to be done and efforts reinforced to rid the world of the scourge of these weapons.

8. The inter-sessional mechanism that was established at the First Meeting of States Parties in Maputo in May 1999, has undoubtedly helped the implementation of the Convention. This mechanism constitutes an excellent platform for combining and organising all measures - that are deemed appropriate - to promote universal application of the Convention. The Coordinating Committee has met 15 times through this inter-sessional period and States Parties have expressed their general satisfaction with the coordination and the current work between the four Standing Committees.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The Convention sets strict time limits for the destruction of stocks and the clearance of mine areas. The Convention gives only some degree of flexibility for deadlines for mine clearance. Therefore, we must all do our utmost to achieve the objectives within the set deadlines of the Convention.

10 Anti-personnel mines continue to have disastrous humanitarian effects and inflict death and injury around the world. There are estimated between 15,000 to 20,000 mine casualties every year. Sadly children are very often the victims. Furthermore, anti-personnel mines have severe economic and social consequences. The mutilation of victims places a heavy burden on afflicted countries already struggling to rebuild their societies and make ends meet. Moreover, the situation of refugees prevented from returning to their homes due to anti-personnel mines is a recurrent challenge. Post-conflict reconstruction, economic recovery, social restoration and development are thereby seriously hampered.

11. Assistance to mine clearance and stockpile destruction alone will not remedy all these problems. To put emphasis solely on these issues would be insufficient. Prominence should be given to a coherent approach covering awareness raising, capacity building, mine clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance. While addressing immediate needs,

international assistance must seek to foster sustainability and local ownership in the affected countries.

12. Anti-personnel mine assistance takes a variety of forms. In a complex world, international cooperation and coordination is of paramount importance. The European Union will work for a strengthening of international coordination and cooperation within humanitarian mine action as a whole. In this regard, the important coordinating roles of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-mining (GICHD), the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) must be commended.

13. Compliance with the Convention and humanitarian mine activities are complimentary. The fulfilment of obligations under the Convention and mine action support both seek to reduce the human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines. In this context, the European Union would also like to recall the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Affected countries, donor countries, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and various NGO's specialized in mine action all share a common goal.

14. The European Union will for its part do the utmost to ensure that disarmament undertakings and humanitarian efforts are intertwined and successfully coordinated.

Mr. Chairman,

15. Implementation of the Ottawa Convention furthermore requires a clear understanding of its provisions, the obligations it imposes and the possibilities it affords. The approval of the guide on transparency measures pursuant to Article 7 of the Convention has facilitated the drawing up of national reports. However, the European Union strongly urges all States Parties to the Convention to submit the mandatory annual updated information reports on transparency measures. These reports have a formal status and underscores States Parties' compliance with the Convention.

Moreover, these reports help identify needs and difficulties to be encountered.

16. With regard to Article 9 of the Convention, the European Union is grateful for the information dossier on national legislative measures elaborated by ICRC. We are confident that this enumeration on instruments to be adopted has facilitated States Parties' efforts to fulfil their legislative, administrative and other obligations under the Convention.

17. The European Union attaches particular significance to Article 8, dealing with compliance with the Convention. Even though, there has, hitherto, been no instance to which to apply the procedures laid down therein discussions must continue on how to make this Article operational. The European Union appeal to all States Parties to be mindful about the obligations imposed on them by this article.

Mr. Chairman,

18. In 2001, the European Community contributed with more than EUR 30 million to mine clearance activities and victim assistance. In that year the overall EU contribution, earmarked by its Member States and the European Community amounted to EUR 145 million.

19. This amounts to a 15% increase compared to the previous year in the total European Union contributions. I would in this regard refer you to the Brochure on the European Union's contributions towards combating anti-personnel mines. The Brochure has been made available to you and provides an overview of projects financed by the European Union and its Member States in various regions of the world.

20. By pledging a total of EUR 240 million in support of mine action for the period 2002-2009, the European Union stands as the main contributor in the world within this area.

21. The two regulations, adopted last year, now provide the framework for specific actions and financial contributions of the European Union in the fight against anti-personnel mines. These regulations covering developing countries and other countries respectively lay down the foundation for a more integrated and focused policy. This framework will be further strengthened by the adoption of a multi-annual 2002-2004 European Community Strategy for assistance to humanitarian mine action. The Strategy is currently being developed. Its financial framework amounts to approximately EUR 110 million for this period.

22. The Strategy aims to make the European Unions support to humanitarian mine action more focused and efficient by improving capacity building and the conduct of operations on the ground as well as by reinforcing mine clearance through geographic and thematic instruments. The underlying principle is that the European Community efforts should be directly related to the goals set by the international community.

23. The European Community Strategy will be related to the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005 and will pursue well-defined objectives. These objectives are either in common with or complimentary to the Convention and to the UN Strategy.

24. This said, the European Union measures could only lead to positive results if they receive constructive support from the States benefiting from them. Even if the States Parties have undertaken no longer to use anti-personnel mines, it is important that Signatory States do their utmost to comply with the objectives, provisions and the whole spirit of the Ottawa Convention.

25. The European Union, although moved primarily by humanitarian concerns, will as it has constantly restated, give priority to directing its aid towards those States Parties and signatories that put the Convention's principles and objectives into practice. Apart from the exemptions in Article 3 of the Convention, the European Union regards the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines, whatever the

context or reasons, as banned by the Convention. Having said that, the European Union has also, both with Community and bilateral Member States' funds supported non-signatory States, primarily as a result of humanitarian needs and development concerns.

26. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to urge the whole international community to join the European Union in a sustained global effort to curtail the suffering caused by these indiscriminate weapons world wide.

27. In that regard, let me pay tribute to the extraordinary and often very dangerous work carried out by the de-miners and to the whole range of actors involved in mine action who have put themselves in the service of the Ottawa Convention. Hitherto, we have had remarkable results due to this common commitment. Our efforts have not been in vain. But still more needs to be done. However, with a combined effort our task can be accomplished.

Thank you Mr. Chairman