



Statement

by the Permanent Representative of Germany
to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Volker Heinsberg,
to the 4th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of
the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines
and on Their Destruction

Geneva, 17 September 2002

Mr Chairman,

Taking the floor for the first time, let me join those expressing deep satisfaction with your assumption of the chair of this fourth meeting of state parties. My delegation is convinced that under your able guidance we will make the progress needed, and is ready to support you in your work.

The Presidency of European Union has already presented our common position. Let me just add a few words on the general views taken in my country.

Despite of the progress achieved so far, we still are faced with the challenge of about 230 million anti-personnel mines worldwide, of which 90 per cent are outside the disarmament rules of the Ottawa Convention. Governments and irregular forces are still using those vicious mines. Whatever exact number of people are killed by APM in one year, they are thousands too many. And yet, we have to add the figure of all those maimed, needing assistance instead of being able to assist. At this point, let me underline our appreciation for the dedicated work done by, in particular, UNMAS and the ICRC, and the many organizations active in the field.

The German Parliament in a resolution adopted in June this year underlined the importance of universalizing Ottawa, in particular of achieving the accession of the United States of America, Russia, China, India and Pakistan, both Korean states and others. We urge those states to join forces with the majority, and ban APM. Our Parliament emphasized the need to strictly comply with the Convention. In the process of drafting the Convention, attempts to include exemptions to the general ban allowing for the exceptional use of APM in conflict were decisively rejected. This is a core element of the Convention. None of us should be found in non-compliance with the obligations entered. A ban is a ban.

The position taken by Germany on the issue of landmines is clearly demonstrated by our engagement under this Convention as regards anti-personnel mines, and the CCW as regards anti-vehicle mines. Under CCW we launched an initiative to tackle the issue of sensitive fuze mechanisms for AVMs. Our Parliament underlined the firm conviction of banning all mines designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons. The Convention clearly defines what is to be considered an anti-personnel mine, and provides for anti-handling devices. A mine fitted with a fuze -not the anti-handling device- of which the construction on purpose is designed to include the actuation also by a person, should be considered an anti-personnel mine and banned under the Convention, regardless of an attached label possibly calling it an anti-vehicle mine, and of the respective amount of explosives going with it. We should reach a common understanding to this end. This does not affect the anti-handling devices which activate when an attempt is made to tamper with or otherwise intentionally disturb the mine.

The German Parliament adopted the above mentioned resolution on the further development of humanitarian arms control on landmines without any Nays. This reflects the consensus existing in our society not only to generously contribute assistance for demining and rehabilitation, but also to refrain from mines that pose a risk to the civilian population. With that backing by Parliament in the fight against anti-personnel mines, it is a pleasure to announce that the German Government stands ready to host the 2004 Review conference.