

***Official Opening of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties
Statement by the President of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties
H.E. Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium***

15 September 2003

Introduction:

Since the Second Meeting of the States Parties, it has been the privilege of the President of the former Meeting of the States Parties to open our annual Conference. This honour is tinted by sadness due to the tragic events in August and September having resulted in the loss of good friends of ours involved in mine action. Our friends of the UN agencies in Baghdad last month and among them Sergio Vieira de Mello who, remember, read the message of the Secretary General at the opening of Fourth Meeting of the States Parties last year. More recently, a member of the Mine Advisory Group in Mosul. It is also a sad duty to present our condolences to the Swedish Government and to the family of Mrs Anna Lindh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, who was such an ardent advocate of multilateralism and disarmament. They will all stay in our memories and in our hearts.

Looking back at the President's Action Programme of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties (4MSP), it is evident that a great deal has been achieved to ensure that the Convention lives up to its humanitarian promise. This is largely due to your active participation in the Intersessional meetings in February and May 2003 each with more than 500 representatives of States Parties, NGOs and international institutions. We have witnessed an incredible level of progress over the past twelve months in mine clearance, stockpile destruction, victim assistance and universalization as well as in those areas that drive progress -- the exchange of information and the mobilisation of resources.

A. Mine clearance:

Costa Rica has been the first State Party reporting mined areas to indicate that it had completed the implementation of Article 5. 40 States Parties have declared in their Article 7 reports that they are affected by the impact of landmines. An additional [6] States Parties, which have not yet submitted their reports, might also be mine-affected. An impressive number of States Parties already have developed plans to clear mines, concentrating on the 4P Approach (**Problems, Plans, Progress and Priorities**) with a view to ensuring that the 10-year period to clear mines will be well used. For all States Parties, which are affected, we must work quickly to ensure that we know the extent of the problem.

B. Stockpile Destruction:

2003 marked the first year when States Parties were required to comply with the Convention's deadline for destroying existing stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. The compliance rate is impressive as it appears that all States Parties with deadlines so far in 2003 have met them and as 59 States Parties have destroyed more than 30 million mines. Today, 110 States Parties now no longer have stockpiled anti-personnel mine.

C. Victim Assistance:

Given the clear understanding that ultimate responsibility rests with mine-affected States Parties, a major effort has been made to provide an opportunity for the voices of these States to be heard. Many of these States already have taken advantage of this opportunity. Approximately 40 of these States Parties may need assistance in meeting the needs of survivors in their countries.

D. Universalization:

Since the 4MSP, eight States ratified or acceded to the Convention: The Gambia, The Central African Republic, Cyprus, Sao Tome and Principe, Timor-Leste, Lithuania, Guyana and Belarus.

136 States have now accepted the Convention, that is 70 % of the world's States, with the highest rate of adherence per continent in the Americas (91 %), Africa (87 %), and Europe (83 %). From the original 133 States, which signed the Convention, only 12 have not yet ratified and are expected to do so in a foreseeable future. 46 States still have to accede to the Convention.

Five States have completed all domestic measures to join the Convention: Burundi, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, Sudan and Turkey. They are encouraged to deposit their instruments as soon as feasible.

E. Exchange of Information:

116 States Parties have complied with their duties under Article 7, paragraph 1, to provide an initial report. 14 States are still late and encouraged to comply as soon as feasible. It is worth recalling that Poland, a Signatory State, and Latvia, which has not acceded to the Convention, voluntarily submitted an Article 7 report in 2003. Through the Intersessional Work Programme, the opportunity also exists to exchange information in an informal manner. Dozens of States Parties took advantage of this opportunity and I am particularly pleased that during the Standing Committee that I had the privilege of Co-Chairing, 24 mine-affected States Parties provided valuable information on their efforts to implement Article 5.

F. Resources:

The Contact Group on Resource Mobilization has started work to ensure that a significant renewal of our collective commitment is made to finish the job of eliminating anti-personnel mines. A great deal of progress has been made in increasing the understanding that resource mobilisation is a collective responsibility.

G. Suggestions

Our Meetings of the States Parties typically have been, on one hand retrospective, and, on the other hand, forward-looking. With a view to balancing my final statement as President of this Convention with some thoughts on the road ahead, let me suggest that all efforts be made before the First Review Conference next year:

- to ensure that up to 150 States have joined the Convention;
- to ensure that up to 5 additional States Parties have joined Costa Rica in completing implementation of Article 5;
- to see that every one of the [46] mine-affected States Parties communicates its 4Ps on mine clearance;
- to see that those who consider it relevant do the same with respect to victim assistance;
- to ensure continued 100% compliance with Article 4;
- to see that those States Parties that have not yet submitted Article 7 reports do so to clarify the situation regarding stocks;
- to ensure a 100% compliance rate with both paragraph 1 and paragraph 2 of Article 7.

Regarding universalization:

- I call on the remaining Permanent Members of the Security Council that are outside of the Convention to show that they have a special responsibility to provide some leadership in universalizing the Convention;
- I call upon the current and future Presidents of the European Union to act with respect to the EU members and future members still outside of the Convention;
- I call upon the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa – the IGAD – to act in that region, especially given the proposed location of the Review Conference next year;
- I call upon the President of the Non-Aligned Movement to follow-up with the NAM membership, particularly with those States that have recently produced, used or transferred AP mines, and
- I call upon the OSCE, including its current and future Presidents, to act in Central Asia.

In closing, let me thank those of you who have supported and shown confidence in me in serving as your President during the past 12 months. Thanks to you, the implementation of this Convention continues to be a unique demonstration of how multilateralism can work, and how, when we work truly as partners, we can make a real difference in the fields of disarmament, development and humanitarian affairs.