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**Statement of Acceptance by
His Excellency Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand,
Upon Assuming the Presidency of
the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, United
Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand,
15 September 2003**

Ambassador Jean Lint, President of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties,
Mr. Kim Hak Su, Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be elected by the members of this august body to serve as President of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. I thank you for entrusting me with this noble task. On behalf of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, I wish to express our profound appreciation to Ambassador Jean Lint, President of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties, for his untiring efforts and dedication to the cause of landmines and the Ottawa Convention for so many years, and in particular for his active presidency over the past year. I would like to reassure Ambassador Lint that his hard work is not only highly appreciated but will be followed upon with an equally strong determination on Thailand's part.

Distinguished Delegates,

We gather here today with a common objective, which is to create a world free from landmines. It is therefore Thailand's honour to bring the Ottawa Convention to Asia for the first time. We believe that this meeting will significantly heighten the awareness of the Governments and people in this region on the threat of landmines to human security in Asia and elsewhere. The Ottawa process addresses both "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want". Its provisions serves not only to enhance a more secure world through the destruction of landmines, but also to promote **people-centered development and human dignity** through the clearance of mines and provision of humanitarian assistance to mine victims. The eventual destruction of anti-personnel landmines

will indeed mark a significant step towards sustainable peace, security and prosperity. We are delighted to have with us strong representation from countries within the region and from other continents. It is through your cooperation that **our shared vision for a mine-free world would come closer to reality.**

Distinguished Delegates,

This meeting is of particular importance as it serves as a **wake-up call** as we prepare for the First Review Conference of the Convention next year. We will take stock and consider practical recommendations arising from the various consultations that have been taking place over the past year under the guidance of Ambassador Jean Lint. This includes the promotion of Ambassador Lint's **4-P approach** on the part of the 45 mine-affected States Parties to the Convention, that is, to communicate the **problems** they face, their **plans** to address these problems, the **progress** they have made and their **priorities** for assistance. The Review Conference, rightly held at the mid-term of the Convention, will provide a unique opportunity for the States Parties to assess our achievements and constraints in the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, Thailand as President of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties, will work closely together with the President-designate and the host country of the First Review Conference to ensure its success.

I wish to take this opportunity to share briefly with you what I envisage this Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to achieve and my approach to attaining those goals during Thailand's Presidency.

First, I wish to see this meeting generate a growing support and an enhanced awareness of the devastating humanitarian effects of landmines. The kind of awareness I am looking for is not only among technicians and experts, but **an awareness at the highest possible political level, and at the grassroots level** to work closely together **towards a mine-free world.**

Secondly, I see this meeting as linking the entire international community at all levels. I wish to see that the issues of landmines are not only taken up in certain capitals, but in all capitals across the globe. I wish to see that in the process leading up to the First Review Conference, **all regions take up this issue as a part of their regional agenda and that cooperation is strengthened within and across the regions.** In this regard, I am particularly pleased to have with us the strong participation of delegations from the African Continent. A significant number of Ministers from African countries only testifies to the fact

that we have plenty to share, be they in terms of concerns, experiences, technologies, or expertise.

Thirdly, I wish to underscore the importance of greater and more active involvement of States outside the Convention. To truly achieve the ultimate objective of the Ottawa Convention, States Parties must individually and collectively work to enhance the understanding of the Ottawa Convention not only among ourselves but also with States Outside the Convention. To attain the goal of the universalization of the Convention, our approach should be **guided by empowerment on an inclusive basis through reaching-out and encouraging voluntary participation.**

As a developing country which had experienced difficulties in implementing the Convention, we can understand well the constraints faced by a number of States Parties in fully implementing their obligations. We can understand even better why a country outside the Convention without sufficient resources and technologies would be reluctant to undertake additional responsibility as a result of joining the Convention. We must demonstrate to States outside the Convention the benefits they would gain from joining the Convention. We must encourage them to recognize that added responsibilities would serve to **translate our assets into wealth for sustained socio-economic development.**

We must, therefore, work together to utilize the combined strength of the high number of States Parties for practical actions and achievements.

We must share experiences and information.

We must exchange and transfer technologies in stockpile destruction, mine clearance, and victim assistance.

We must increase assistance in mine surveys for countries in need to identify the scope and the seriousness of the landmine situation.

We must encourage new and innovative ways to make efficient use of limited resources in mine clearance. This includes pooling resources and technologies for mine clearance regionally and globally which could be a practical and viable option. A regional depot for mine clearance equipments, a regional center for mine clearance technologies, a regional or a global fund for mine clearance, all these, I offer to you as food for thoughts to further ponder upon to enable us **to move closer towards a mine-free world.**

Last but not least, I feel that to create a mine-free world, partnership is of utmost importance and must be strengthened. This is why I am pleased to see an unprecedented high number of representatives of the civil society participating in this Fifth Meeting of States Parties. In fact, the Ottawa Convention owes its origins to the **voices** raised by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Convention is, as we all know, one of the most effective international legal instruments as a result of the **strong partnership between States and the civil society**.

We need to encourage a greater role of the media as well as the private sector. We are pleased to see a wide media coverage for this meeting. We hope to see continuity in their work so as to raise public awareness on this imperative issue of landmines. We also wish to see the private sector increase its role in victim assistance programmes and in public campaign against landmines. **States alone cannot undertake this enormous task.**

Most importantly, our efforts must be to allow the victims, the mine survivors and their families to raise their voices, speak for themselves and have their voice heard. All victim assistance programmes should be people-centered, mine survivors-centered and tailored to meet the requirements of those concerned. After all, the Ottawa process is about humanity as stressed by Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana, Patron of Thailand Mine Action Centre, earlier this morning. Our partnership must, therefore, involve the mine victims and their families. Our success will be measured by **the number of saved lives**.

Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to reassure you of my commitment and determination to promote the universal acceptance of the Ottawa Convention and its norms. The success of this Fifth Meeting of the States Parties and of the Ottawa Convention process depends upon each and every one of us. I look forward to working with you all over the next five days and in the years to come in the spirit of cooperation, friendship and partnership **to move closer towards our aspiration for a safer world without mines**.
