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INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO BAN LANDMINES  
STATEMENT TO OPENING SESSION\*  
FIFTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE MINE BAN TREATY  
Bangkok, Thailand, 15 September 2003**

Mr. Minister, Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, first I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. Also, thank you for the opportunity to address the opening session of this important gathering.

I must echo the words of President of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties, Belgian Ambassador Jean Lint, in expressing our deep sadness at the loss of Mr. Sergio Viera de Mello in the recent attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad. We all will recall that it was Mr. de Mello who joined us at the 4MSP in Geneva one year ago to speak on behalf of the Secretary General at the opening of that Meeting. Mr. de Mello was always a strong supporter and friend of our joint efforts to eliminate antipersonnel landmines. We all must mourn the loss of an individual committed to giving his best to make the world a better place for us all.

At the same time, we are fortunate to have with us Mr. Martin Barber of UNMAS, who was also in the UN building at the time of the attack, when so many others were killed and injured. Other of our UNMAS colleagues, who would have been in Bangkok, cannot be here because they are recovering from their injuries in that attack -- an attack which underscores the incredible fragility in which we find ourselves in today's world.

Other speakers today have made allusions to that fragility and I will take a moment to address the issue a bit more now. As I stand here before you, I cannot help but remember two years ago as we were preparing to meet for the 3MSP in Managua, Nicaragua -- another mine-affected country which has played an important role in the ban movement. It was just days before we were scheduled to depart for Managua that the terrorist attacks took place on September 11 in New York City and Washington, DC.

That heinous crime, which took the lives of thousands of innocent civilians, sowed fear and uncertainty not only in the United States, but also around the globe. Because of that uncertainty, it was not at all clear that the 3MSP would be able to go forward. However, we all recognized that not to proceed would be to give in to terror. We recognized that it was critical that the international community continue its efforts to deal with the multitude of issues confronting us all. Much to our great pleasure -- and a clear indicator of the global commitment to the Mine Ban Treaty -- over 100 nations made the tremendous effort in those very difficult days following September 11 to travel to Managua to continue our work to eliminate landmines -- a weapon of daily terror for tens of thousands of people in some 82 countries around the world.

I certainly did not think then that at future meetings of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty we would be living in a world that feels even less stable than the world of two

years ago. Yet as incredible as it may seem, the world seems to be increasingly unstable as a result of the responses to the attacks of September 11. We meet here in Bangkok this week for the 5MSP at a point of great tension in the world. At the core of that tension is a struggle between those who would have one nation – or a small handful of nations – determine how the multitude of threats facing us all on this very small planet are to be met or whether it will be a community of nations, international bodies and institutions, and civil society joining together to take a different – a truly multilateral -- path and redefine global security in terms of human security.

One of the hallmarks of the Mine Ban Treaty is the Ottawa Process – that process in which governments, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations came together in open partnership to deal with the global humanitarian crisis posed by antipersonnel landmines. That process – that alternative model of a new diplomacy – is also currently under threat. Because it is being threatened, in my view it is even more important that we redouble our efforts to make certain that the tremendous progress we have seen already in the short life of this international treaty continues unabated.

What we have accomplished through this movement is not just the possibility of a world free of the daily terror of landmines. What we have accomplished together continues to give hope to people all over the world – in spite of the terrible instability in the world today -- that there are alternative methods to address our common problems. As we continue to make progress, we continue to inspire that hope. As we continue to make progress, we do inspire more and more people to take action for positive change around the world.

This is the critical context in which we find ourselves today as we congratulate Thailand for its assumption of the presidency of the 5MSP. This uncertain global situation is the backdrop against which we should again thank Belgium and its able Ambassador Jean Lint for all the progress we have seen in the last year under his leadership. The progress since our Managua meeting is certainly the result of our continued joint actions, but our work has been greatly enhanced because of Jean Lint's dedication and leadership both as the able representative of his government, but also because of his deep personal commitment to a mine-free world. We should also thank Ambassador Lint for his final comments as President of the 4MSP, in particular for the concrete challenges that he posed to us all -- clear targets for action in period leading up to the Review Conference in Nairobi, Kenya in December of 2004.

We are certain that under the able leadership of Thailand as President of the 5MSP, we will meet those challenges. The Royal Government of Thailand has already demonstrated its clear commitment to that leadership role. The fact that Princess Galyani Vadhana presided over the Opening Ceremony of the Meeting, and that the Presidency was assumed today by Foreign Minister, Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, leaves no doubt of Thailand's intention to be a totally committed leader in this critical period.

But how could it be any other way? Thailand is a mine-affected country. It feels the impact of landmines in the blood of its own people. Thailand has consistently shown its commitment by destroying its stockpiles before the treaty-mandated deadline, by engaging in mine action programs in the country, and by helping provide for the needs of its landmine survivors. In our press conference right before this session, Minister Surakiart Sathirathai also spoke of steps that his government has already been taking to engage other Asian nations and move toward the universalization of the Mine Ban Treaty in this region of great challenges to the eradication of landmines. We are confident of the key role that the Royal Government of Thailand will play both nationally, regionally and internationally as we move forward toward the Review Conference in Nairobi.

As I close, I want to echo the words of speakers before me today who have noted the importance of the Nairobi Conference. At the Review Conference, not only will we be assessing the progress made since the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty in Ottawa, Canada in December of 1997, but also we will be looking forward, as we in the mine ban movement always do. At that Conference, States Parties will decide the structure of our work over the next five-year period through 2009 – another important date for many states who must meet the treaty deadline for mine clearance by that time. Just as we have been pleased to have such high level participation at this Meeting in Bangkok, we call upon all States Parties to participate in the Review Conference in Nairobi at the highest levels. This will demonstrate their clear intention to maintain the commitment necessary for us to reach our goal of a mine free planet.

In speaking of commitment, there is one other issue I need to highlight – a point I made last year and hoped I would not be making again this year. In her comments this morning, Princess Astrid of Belgium invoked words of the Preamble of the Mine Ban Treaty regarding landmine survivors when she spoke of their plight. We were all pleased that the Mine Ban Treaty called upon nations to address the needs of landmine survivors as part of their treaty obligations. Yet today, five years into the life of the treaty, survivors still find too many of their needs unmet. Of 82 nations reporting mine survivors this year in *Landmine Monitor Report 2003*, some 48 of those states indicate gaps in their ability to deal adequately with the needs of their survivors.

We have been pleased to see increased resources this year for mine action. At the same time, there is ongoing concern that the commitment of donor countries to address the needs of landmine survivors lags too far behind their support for mine clearance. It is not difficult to understand why – once a landmine is cleared or destroyed in stockpiles it is over and done with. We hear no more from those landmines. Landmine survivors, on the other hand, have needs that must be dealt with not once – at the time of the mine incident – or twice in the provision of prostheses, but for the rest of their lives. We must strive harder to address all the needs of landmine survivors. We must just not listen to their stories to keep us grounded in our work while we fail to provide the resources necessary to address the needs they describe when they talk of their deep desire to be fully participating members of their families, their communities and their societies. How can we give them such short shrift? Is it not because of the human cost that this movement came together? Human beings, after all, are at the heart of this movement to

eradicate the scourge of landmines. We work to ensure that some day there will be a world where no one will live with the terror of landmines – but in keeping our focus on that goal, we cannot overlook those who have already known that terror.

In closing, I want to thank the many of you who have commended me as an emotional and inspiring speaker. While I thank you for that, I want you to know that for me, emotion and inspiration without follow-up action are largely irrelevant. I trust that whatever inspiration you might feel as a result of my comments today will continue to be turned into concrete action as we work together to achieve our goals. Because of what we have achieved already and what we will continue to achieve, we give hope to people all over the world that one day we will live in a world free of landmines. And please do not doubt for a moment that whenever our model of new diplomacy prevails, we also give hope to people everywhere but there is another way to deal with humanitarian and security issues. We make people believe that governments, international bodies and civil society can work together to address the critical issues that threaten us all. We inspire people everywhere to believe that global security can be enhanced when we work together to address human security.

THANK YOU.

(\*Please note that this address was reconstructed after the fact from Jody Williams' extemporaneous remarks.)