

MALAWI STATEMENT AT THE 5TH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES ON THE LANDMINE BAN TREATY IN BANGKOK, THAILAND 15-19 SEPTEMBER 2003

Mr, President, my delegation would like to join other delegations in congratulating you for being elected as president of this meeting. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the people and Government of Thailand for the warm hospitality accorded to us.

Mr. President, during the last intersessional meeting in May, Malawi requested the chairperson to consider sending a technical team to assist in conducting an assessment mission on the Landmine problem and unexploded ordinances. My delegation is pleased and encouraged Mr. President to report that indeed the United Nations (UN) responded to our request by sending an assessment mission comprising the United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from New York who visited Malawi from 21-28 August 2003. Malawi is very grateful to these organisations for this quick response and action because this is a true indication of the UN commitment in implementing the Ottawa Convention to ensure a world free of landmines including Malawi.

Mr. President, Malawi is aware that the U.N assessment team will produce its own report regarding the country's situation. However, we wish to point out that Landmines and UXOs continue to pose a threat as incidents continue to occur. In May this year, we reported an incident that happened on 26 April where a

child aged 7 was severely injured and his leg was amputated. The UN Team visited this place. In May this year, a Rocket launcher was found lying in the open in the same district of Mangochi that borders with our neighboring Mozambique where Landmines have exploded before and several UXOs found in the open.

In another development, it has been noted that UXOs pose a threat in some of the 33 former camps for the disbanded Malawi young pioneers (MYP) which was a paramilitary wing of the one party state era before the adoption of a multiparty system of government in 1994. For instance in the year 2000, one civilian was killed at Nchisi a former MYP base when a rocket Launcher shell exploded which he was ignorantly using as a hammer. Although some incidents have not been recorded, the country has so far registered 32 deaths of civilians and 1079 others injured as a result of landmine and UXOs explosions.

In our implementation measures Malawi has established the Landmine National Committee, and we are in the process of preparing a Landmine Act that would spell out relevant details regarding the landmine ban and also act as a legal authority for the National Committee and funding by Parliament.

In liaison with the civil society, we are compiling the exact number of victims in order to assess the level of assistance required.

Malawi is also in the process of conducting awareness programmes especially in areas where citizens are prone to these explosions. We believe this is an important project to prevent further casualties.

Mr President, distinguished delegates, we believe Malawi is now on the right track with the support and guidance of this August house. We hope that the UN assessment report will highlight the Landmine problem in Malawi. We wish to appeal to the donor community to study the document and consider assistance where necessary.

Mr. President , distinguished delegates, I thank you for your attention.