



SLOVAKIA

Address

by

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**at the Fifth Meeting of State Parties to the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction**

Bangkok, September 16, 2003

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is great pleasure for me to address this Meeting in a country that has taken a lot of endeavors to cope with the landmine problem in many aspects – from promoting the universal ban of antipersonnel mines through getting rid of this horrifying weapon on parts of its territory to organizing this Meeting in an excellent way.

Mr. President,

Let me congratulate you on your assumption of your duties as President of the Fifth Meeting of State Parties and wish you a lot of success in leading us towards our common cause of a mine free world.

The intervention of the European Union with which Slovakia has aligned herself is the most appropriate expression of the way of our thinking in terms of the Ottawa Convention. I would like to briefly stress just few elements which my country considers important to stress.

The First Review Conference approaches very quickly. In its preparation we should have a look where we stand and what is possible to make in the remaining period so that the evaluation of the results of achievements is satisfactory not for us but for those who still live with the threat of becoming targets of the indiscriminate effects of antipersonnel landmines. I am convinced that we have come here to take such steps that would move us to stating at the above-mentioned opportunity that the glass is by far more full than empty.

Universalizing the Convention comes to the first place. Although the pace of acceding to the Convention is unprecedented in history we cannot be satisfied that there are still too many countries which have not given up a weapon that hardly

makes any difference in military terms but does make huge difference for civilians. There are too many countries among them whose example would cause a further domino effect in the process of giving up APMs similar to that we have together launched in December 1997. Let us help them to overcome their hesitation by our positive experience and examples that show they have nothing to lose while many people have a lot to gain.

At the second place Slovakia puts the issue of understanding of the Convention. It is imperative that not later than at Review Conference in 2004 we should reach a common understanding of all definitions that are presently not unambiguous enough. Again it is first of all victims of effects of indiscriminate weapons who have absolute right to be presented with the removal of the confusion about what the Convention bans and what it does not. Lives and health of many depend on this. Lets consider the issues from this point of view. We believe that other related concerns can be dealt with in satisfactorily manner, too. Oslo decisions in this respect are essential.

While growing understanding of the purpose of the Convention among governments over the world is encouraging, we remain concerned about the behaviour of a number of non-state actors that continue resort to using APMs. We urge them to get realized that their effects has huge potential to hurt their people even many years after their actions. In this respect we commend, International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations and those non-governmental organizations that strive for engaging non-state actors on joining the APMs ban for the benefit of all people including for their own sake.

There are many particular issues that deserve addressing. I am sure they will be dealt with in speeches of my distinguished colleagues. Let me therefore conclude my intervention by expressing my hope that this conference and the period preceding our first review conference will result in growth of our satisfaction with the number and

importance of states that join us in understanding that APMs are enemy to all. The sooner we get rid of the last piece the more happy mankind we will see.

Thank you for your attention.