

LITHUANIA

Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention
(Bangkok, 15-19 September 2003)

18 September 2003

Mr. President,

Let me join the previous speakers in extending our delegation's warmest congratulations on your appointment to preside over this Meeting. Our congratulations also go to the other office bearers.

Lithuania fully subscribes to the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy on behalf of the European Union. Yet, I seize this opportunity to address this Meeting given that on 1st of November the Mine Ban Treaty enters into force for Lithuania.

A truly universal ratification process of the Mine Ban Treaty can hardly overshadow yet an even more remarkable impact the Convention's principles and its implementation mechanism has had upon the scope and pace of demining, humanitarian and practical disarmament efforts. Universalisation and full implementation of this international norm remains an uphill task. We believe, however, that the universalisation of the Convention serves to enhance transparency, build confidence and promote better understanding among states.

We felt it increasingly important to spearhead the Ottawa process in our neighbourhood. Having signed the Ottawa Convention in 1999 Lithuania participated in all the meetings of the states parties as well as the intersessional experts meetings. It has co-sponsored annual UNGA resolutions on the Ottawa Convention and on Mine Action and has been one of the first to voluntarily submit a transparency measure under Article 7. Subsequently, on May 12, 2003 the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania deposited the instrument of ratification of the Ottawa Convention with the Secretary General of the UN in New York.

Our unequivocal commitment has been equally extended to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, of which the amendment to Article 1 has been promptly ratified. Our experts have contributed to the ongoing discussions on the problems of explosive remnants of war and of mines other than antipersonnel mines. Lithuanian navy and mine countermeasure forces have been taking part in international sea mine clearing programmes and joint exercises.

On the practical level, Kaunas Engineering School, with the help of our Swedish partners, has lately been running international training courses for skilled explosive ordnance disposal experts from different countries. This will shortly allow us to be more effective contributors to international mine action. Any contribution from other countries to these courses would be very welcome.

Mr. President,

It is particularly welcome to observe that some countries from our region have now voluntarily submitted their Article 7 reports and have become regular co-sponsors of UNGA resolutions and contributors to the Ottawa process and international mine action. Today I extend my congratulations to our neighbour, the Republic of Belarus, on its recent deposit of its instrument of accession to the convention, on the eve of this Fifth Meeting. We wish to take these efforts further, facilitate meaningful regional dialogue, exchange experience and ideas.

Finally, I wish to end my statement with a note of deep appreciation for the excellent work done by outgoing president Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium. Equally, may I commend the work of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, including successfully established Implementation Support Unit. We also sincerely appreciate the work undertaken by the Four Standing Committees, their Co-chairs and Co-Rapporteurs, by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, United Nations Mine Action Service and many NGOs working behind the scenes and on the ground.

We believe that implementation of the policies banning anti-personal mines will be achieved through co-operation, co-ordination, and implementation of the obligations as contained in the Mine Ban Treaty and universal adherence to the Treaty.

I thank you.