

Statement by Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria
19 September 2003

Mr. President

Let me first of all thank you wholeheartedly for the confidence that you have expressed by nominating me as President of the Review Conference in Nairobi next year. I know that with this confidence comes a considerable amount of expectation on your part. I will try to do my utmost to live up to these expectations.- For this: I need your support.

I look forward to working very closely with Thai-Presidency and with Kenya as the host country as well as with all of you who want to help me with this big challenge. I truly believe that the spirit of partnership is not just an empty phrase, it is what really characterises this process and what makes it different from many other fora. I shall see to it, that - as in the past - this unique blend of States Parties, International Organisations and civil society will all be driving our work forward to Nairobi and beyond.

But, before looking ahead, please allow me to thank my dear friend Ambassador Jean Lint, who did such an outstanding job to set the stage for the work ahead of us. Let me share a secret with you: it was all Jean's idea and now he thinks he can leave us...

Mr. President, dear friends,

Time is of the essence.

There are only 14 months left, with two Intersessionals and two rather short PrepComs to prepare for this 1st ever Review Conference. Since I am fully committed to an inclusive and transparent approach, I intend to use all opportunities for informal contacts with you all. In turn, I am asking you for the fullest possible cooperation and your creative input.

This should not be just another Conference. We have a rare opportunity to make a real difference for so many people. This is about human security after all.

I don't want to go too much into detail today, but it is important to keep in mind that the Convention requires us to address a number of issues. Firstly, we will have to thoroughly assess what has been achieved so far in order to be able to devise a clear, ambitious, yet realistic Plan of Action for the crucial years to come. We will also have to draw conclusions about how the Convention works and we will have to decide how we want to structure our work in the period after Nairobi.

However, foremost of all, we will have to recommit ourselves to really finish the job that we have set out to accomplish with this process. In order to achieve this, we will have to send a powerful and clear message – words that strike a chord with the people. This is what I would expect from the high-level segment on the Convention's anniversary, on the last day of the Nairobi Conference.

This important work needs to be well structured. In order not to lose time, I will provide you soon with a non-paper that will contain more detailed thoughts on how I intend to organise our work.

Again, I would like to thank you all and lets get on with it !