
Speech

by

His Excellency

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President and Commander-in-Chief of the
Armed Forces of the Republic of Kenya

OCCASION: **OPENING SESSION OF THE
HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE
NAIROBI SUMMIT, 2004 ON A
MINE FREE WORLD**

VENUE: **UNITED NATIONS
HEADQUARTERS, GIGIRI**

DATE: **2ND DECEMBER, 2004**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to Nairobi and hope that you are enjoying your stay in our country as you continue with your deliberations.

I would like to first of all reiterate Kenya's appreciation for this opportunity to host this great conference in the spirit of international solidarity. **We** are all interconnected as states and as human beings. **In** this global village, my neighbour's problem must become my problem. **It** is therefore proper and fitting that Kenya should host this conference on behalf of Africa - the most mined continent.

The last three days have marked a significant milestone in the long history of the campaign against the use of anti-personnel mines. It has crystallized our collective efforts to end the suffering and death caused by these devices.

In my address at the opening ceremony on Sunday afternoon, I challenged the conference to come up with viable proposals to end this menace. **D**uring the last three days, we have been constantly reminded of the scourge of landmines. **W**hile progress has been made towards the elimination of these deadly weapons and the menace they cause, there are still a number of pressing challenges to be overcome.

It is still estimated that the annual rate of new landmine casualties in recent years is between 15,000 and 20,000. These landmines are continuing to inflict casualties in nearly every region of the world. In Africa, these weapons remain a major impediment to post-conflict reconstruction. In Angola, for instance, more than 3,000 people have been killed or maimed by mines over the last six years.

Each state – no matter how big or how small; no matter how rich or how poor – has a responsibility to protect innocent civilians from the suffering and indignity caused by these weapons. Together, we can put an end to the growing list of casualties of anti-personnel mines. It is for these reasons that Kenya takes its obligations as a state party to the Convention very seriously.

We were among the first core group of states that signed the Convention upon its adoption in Ottawa. **Kenya** ratified the Convention four years ago.

Since then, we have lived up to our obligations by, among other things, destroying more than 35,000 stockpiled anti-personnel mines. We have complied with the treaty obligations in a spirit of transparency and accountability by submitting regular reports.

Our troops have also participated and continue to participate in mine clearance activities as part of the UN peace-keeping forces on the Ethiopia-Eritrea boarder.

My government has worked closely with the African Union and IGAD at the sub-regional level to help heal the wounds in war torn countries in the horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.

These efforts are beginning to bear fruit especially in southern Sudan and Somalia. Yesterday, we recorded yet another milestone on the road towards peace and stability in Somalia, when the Prime Minister of the Transitional National Government of Somalia announced his cabinet.

I urge the international community to continue supporting the peace initiatives for Sudan and Somalia. **I**n particular, I urge for increased international support towards reconstruction of Southern Sudan and Somalia to consolidate the peace initiatives for which we have all worked so hard.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

This conference has served to remind people everywhere that the fight against landmines continues. It has succeeded in increasing awareness of the need to work towards achieving universality of the Convention to ban anti-personnel mines.

In this regard, I once again appeal to all non-state parties to join the Convention so that we can work as one team to wipe out this menace from the face of the earth.

The Nairobi declaration and the programme of action must be supported by all states. We must also bring pressure to bear on non-state actors to stop the use of anti-personnel mines.

We have traveled from all corners of the globe to deliberate on ways and means of ending the menace caused by landmines. **The** journey must not end here, in Nairobi. **We** must continue the crusade and focus our attention on the road from Nairobi. **We** must remind mighty states which are still outside the Convention that they do not need these crude weapons.

Certainly, if small states can eliminate these weapons from their arsenals, there is no justification for the mighty and powerful states and those with sophisticated weapons to continue clinging on to them.

In conclusion, allow me to say this. The Ottawa Convention is about landmines, but it also concerns broader principles relating to responsibility and humanitarianism. These are principles which must be observed by all states and individuals.

As we celebrate the achievements made towards the common goal of ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines, let this Summit on a Mine Free world be remembered as the forum where states and individuals renewed their commitment to the goal of total elimination of landmines.

Let us also commit ourselves to assist landmine survivors requiring lifelong care, and to clear mined areas in order to allow for resettlement of displaced persons.

Let us remember that we are in this together. Let us move forward in unity and solidarity. Together we can, and will succeed in bequeathing to future generations a safer and mine-free world.

Thank you.