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Speech

by

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Head of the Swiss Delegation**

to

The First Review Conference of States Parties on the Mine Ban Treaty

2 December 2004 in Nairobi

Mr President,

Delegates of the States Parties to the Convention,

Ladies and gentlemen

No new victims – only a short while ago this slogan would have sounded like pure fantasy. However, five years after the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, this fantasy has become a goal – the goal of **144** States Parties, the goal of numerous non-governmental organisations and the goal of leading international organisations such as the ICRC and the UN.

No new victims – in the past few years we have come nearer to this goal. But we are still a long way from fully achieving it. As long as villages and paths, watering places and fields, schools and hospitals are mined, there will be mine victims. This is why the Swiss government has pledged to continue its commitment in the coming years and to support mine-affected states in the prevention of accidents. During the Swiss chairmanship of the Mine Action Support Group in New York next year we will give priority to achieving synergies between mine action, peace and development.

No new victims – achieving this humanitarian goal makes high demands on our states. Even after this review conference, sufficient resources will have to be provided, co-ordinated and systematically implemented. States Parties will have to review the implementation and the lasting impact of the Ottawa Convention. Informal exchanges between the intersessionals and meetings between States Parties will therefore remain important in future. Switzerland is willing to host these events in Geneva and to support them financially. In this context I would like to mention the work of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, which was founded by Switzerland. The centre makes an exceptional contribution to the development of the Ottawa process and to the successful implementation of the convention. The very wide-ranging support of the centre by 18 states is clear evidence of the high standards set by this institution. Switzerland will continue to contribute substantially both financially and politically to the centre and hence also the International Support Unit.

No new victims – this goal commits us to clearing mines from the areas where people live, alerting people to the dangers of mines and ensuring that the Mine Ban Treaty comes into effect worldwide. However, in doing so we must not forget existing victims. They and their families must be guaranteed a future in spite of the tragic accidents they have suffered. They must be given access to medical and psychological and social support and they should be integrated into the community both socially and economically. Victim support has always been a priority for Switzerland.

No new victims – this demand applies to victims of all kinds of anti-personnel mines – those laid by states as well as those laid by armed non-state groups. Non-governmental organisations such as the Appel de Genève and ICBL have been trying with increasing success to persuade them to stop using anti-personnel mines. However, states should also exercise their responsibilities. States Parties to the Ottawa Convention should enable the establishment of contacts with non-state armed groups. States that have official or informal contacts to non-state armed groups should exert pressure and influence on them to stop using anti-personnel mines. The issue of anti-personnel mines should also be taken into account in ceasefire agreements and peace treaties. Switzerland has organised a seminar on anti-personnel mines and non-state armed actors in Montreux.

Finally I would like to thank our Kenyan host on behalf of the Swiss government for his wonderful hospitality. It is very important that the review conference is taking place on the continent where a large number of people fall victim to anti-personnel mines. Let us hope that our objective will be realised as soon as possible on the African continent: no new victims.

Mr President, thank you for your attention.