

Talking Points
Mr. Makhtar Diop, Country Director for Kenya,
Eritrea and Somalia
The World Bank
Address to the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World
December 3, 2004

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Representatives,

On behalf of the President of the World Bank, Mr. James Wolfensohn, I would like to thank you for inviting the World Bank to this historic Summit.

I would like to take this occasion to tell you about the World Bank's agenda on conflict and development, which addresses the landmine issue. As you are aware, the World Bank has traditionally been a frontline source of funding for economic reform, infrastructure, capacity building, social safety nets, and improved social services such as health, the fight against HIV/AIDs, and education.

The Bank's conflict and development agenda continues to evolve and we are currently determining how our work can better assist vulnerable countries that are facing potential conflict. The Bank has been a major partner in multi-donor post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Timor-Leste, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the West Bank and Gaza, Afghanistan, Liberia, Iraq, Haiti, and most recently Sudan – and we are directly involved in the donor partnership supporting Somalia's efforts to re-establish peace with a sovereign national government. To better support these efforts, we

have added new financial instruments, made existing funding mechanisms more flexible and developed strong partnerships with other development actors.

We are relative newcomers in the field of landmines. However, we see our role in these activities as entirely consistent with our objectives of supporting human development. As our role has expanded in post-conflict situations, so too has our role in de-mining activities. We have thus far funded landmine clearance projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia and Ethiopia, totaling 91.5 million U.S. dollars. In addition we have provided Post-Conflict Fund grants for landmine awareness in Sri Lanka, and have funded analysis of the costs of landmine contamination in Afghanistan.

In a recent meeting with His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Mr. Wolfensohn agreed that the problem of mines is not simply a humanitarian issue, but a development issue with tremendous socio-economic implications for the affected countries, and that it is a major obstacle to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Mr. Wolfensohn reiterated that if there is demand from our client countries, the Bank stands ready to work in partnership with other stakeholders to support de-mining activities, capacity building and mine awareness programs in affected countries.

Going forward, the Bank is ready to be engaged in de-mining when we receive a request from a government which has prioritized landmine issues in its national development planning, ideally in the form of a PRSP. In

addition, we are ready to work with the international landmine community, and we will contribute to addressing the development impact of landmine contamination, especially where this can contribute to reaching the Millennium Development Goals. Our criteria for Bank financing of landmine clearing activities are fairly straightforward:

- First, they must be an integral part of a development project
- Second, they should be justified on economic grounds
- Third, implementation must be carried out under the control of civilian institutions, and
- Fourth, the legal agreements must include a covenant under which the borrowing country undertakes not to lay new landmines anywhere in the country.

For countries that meet these basic criteria, we have prepared a Task Manager's Guide to assist our staff better respond to country needs; and in collaboration with the Mine Action Team of the UNDP we have recently issued an internal note raising staff awareness of the adverse social and economic effects of landmine contamination.

With more than 80 countries affected by landmines – most of them in developing countries where we are already active – we in the Bank fully understand that this issue is critical to ensuring a secure environment for poor people to seek a better life. We are also conscious of the magnitude of the task ahead for the entire community of international partners who have banded together to take it on. This Summit has made it possible for all

stakeholders to focus on the ways to re-energize the process. The World Bank stands ready to join you in this important endeavor.

Thank you.