

SPEECH
OF
AMBASSADOR
MICHEL HADDAD
AT THE FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE
OF STATES PARTY TO THE CONVENTION ON THE
PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION
AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR
DESTRUCTION

NAIROBI, DECEMBER 3RD 2004

His Excellency Ambassador Wolfgang Pretrisch

President of the first review conference to the convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction.

Excellencies.

Allow me first Mr. President to congratulate you on your election as President of this conference, and to wish you success in your arduous endeavours in the same time I extend my deep appreciations to Kenya for hosting this conference and for the excellent preparation.

Mr. President.

The Lebanese people suffered from the devastating effects of mines, both, during the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon and following the liberation of most of its territories.

- Throughout the occupation, the inhabitants of south Lebanon were subjected to inhumane conditions, not least of which, at the Ansar and El-Khiam detention camps where detainees were subjected to intolerably brutal practices reflecting the darkest times in human history.

- Moreover, in the aftermath of the liberation of most of our territories, hundreds of thousands of landmines, as well as UXO (unexploded ordnances) were left behind causing the death and injury of hundreds of civilians. The majority of these casualties have been children between the ages of 13 and 18, most of them injured while simply playing. Adult civilians were also hurt while engaged in agricultural activities or traveling in vehicles, about 4000 victims 45% of them were killed, 8% among them by cluster bombs.

Mr. President

Lebanon has a very rich cultural and political heritage. It is constantly revealed in his respect of international law, and his practices in International forums. Lebanon is one of the founding members of the United Nations Organization, as well as a major contributor in drafting the Universal Declaration of human rights in 1948. Lebanon completely believes in the supremacy of human rights, global peace, and international law. His cooperation with the United Nations, its relevant organizations, states donors and NGOs; in the de-mining and destroying landmines and UXO, left by Israel, is a clear witness to that. The National Demining Office of the Lebanese army, in charge of the national Demining operations, coordinates these activities, as acknowledged by the United Nations and stated in the Landmines Monitor Report of 2003.

The work of this office has undergone significant progress; allow me Mr. President to briefly expose some illustrations:

- **Demining of affected areas.** With the cooperation of several donor countries, international organisations, the United Nations, and national NGOs, the National Demining Office succeeded in Demining 2.85 million square meters of mined areas, in destroying 137,000 antipersonnel and anti-vehicle mines, and diffusing 81,000 UXO, and sets new project including technical survey assessment in order to accelerate Demining operations.
- **Establishment of a mine risk education program.** This program reached approximately one hundred thousand students, which represents 50% of the registered students in south Lebanon and other regions and around 500,000 people out of 800,000 current inhabitants. This program includes songs, plays and games with attractive presentations animated in most cases by the civil society.
- **Establishment of a National Mine Victim Assistance Committee.** The actions undertaken by this committee in cooperation with the ministry of social affairs, the ministry of health and other several ministries the Lebanese Red cross, the Council of the south, hundreds of volunteers and local and International NGOs set up across 38 centres; provide First Aid Service and evacuation assistance to victims. Several workshops and training centres support rehabilitation efforts, allowing the victims to easily reintegrate society and participate in economic activities.

Mr. President

Lebanon, with its ambitious plan to demine approximately 3,500 mined areas covering 140 square kms, 80% of which are in south Lebanon, faces numerous obstacles to the acceleration of these operations. And stand as well in the way of Lebanon's adherence to the Ottawa Convention and in joining the collective effort of the signatory states in order to make the world more secure. These obstacles are:

- 1- The failure of the government of Israel to submit all the maps showing the deployment of landmines left by their retreating forces. Therefore Lebanon strongly requests the implantation of the decision of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, number E/CN.4/2002/L.15, adopted on its 58th session held on March 2002, stating in its 4th paragraph:

“Calls upon the government of Israel to submit to the United Nations Interim force in Lebanon all the maps of the landmine fields laid throughout the civilian villages, fields and farms...»

- 2- The continued occupation by Israel of parts of southern Lebanon creates a constant threat to the civilian population and to stability in the region.
- 3- Israel, which continues to produce and use of landmines, has not instituted a national demining program, and willingly makes statements through its officials that de-mining is no longer her priority. In addition, Israel refuses to accede to the Ottawa Convention in order to escape its obligations towards peace and human rights.

Mr. President.

Lebanon, has never produced or exported anti-personnel mines, and despite its non-accession yet to the Ottawa convention, has attended, as observer, the conferences held in Ottawa, Canada in 1997, the fourth meeting of state parties in September 2002, and actively participated in many meetings dealing with anti-personnel mines, including those of February and May 2004, Lebanon is cooperating with the Land Mines Monitoring Committee by providing it with all the needed information, and confirms his beliefs in the principles of the Ottawa Convention and its noble objectives, and looks forwards to joining the treaty as soon as the abovementioned reasons cease to exist.

Finally, Lebanon calls on the United Nations and the International Community to provide her with technical, financial and procedural advances to facilitate and accelerate de-mining efforts; to support the government in implementing its ambitious plan to find, clear, and reconstruct the affected areas, to help the displaced population to return to their villages and their fields in order to contribute to the economic cycle, and to free Lebanon of these “silent killers”.

Thank you Mr. President