

Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World

statement by
Mr. DALIUS ČEKUOLIS
Undersecretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Lithuania

3 December 2004

Mr. President, Excellencies,

Just a little over a year ago, Lithuania became the first Baltic state to join the Ottawa Convention. We became part of the global collective solution to ending the human suffering caused by indiscriminate anti-personnel mines.

Lithuania started small and learned big. We have joined those who believe that there is no place for antipersonnel mines in today's world. We have learned that no complexities of security environment can justify holding or using them. We have seen antipersonnel mines become precursors to humanitarian disasters for years perpetuating poverty, desperation, and regional instability.

Lithuania underscored its commitment to this global movement by destroying the all of its 4,000 stockpiled antipersonnel mines in June this year. This small plot of land in the geographical centre of Europe is now a mine-free zone.

A mine-free world starts at home, in the neighbourhood of our countries. The regional adherence to the objectives of the Ottawa Convention remains a priority to us. The Conference held this June in Vilnius, Lithuania, and devoted to advancing the mine-free world objectives in North-Eastern Europe has clearly highlighted the importance of regional

co-operation. More important, the Vilnius Conference has contributed to building confidence and focusing assistance goals.

It is now evident that great strides are being made in our region. New states are joining the convention, more stockpiles are being destroyed and more assistance is being made available in North-Eastern Europe. Lithuania is committed to continue working with partners in this collective effort.

For the first time, Lithuania has become a donor to international mine action and has joined Mine Action Support Group in New York. We are mobilising our resources and will continue to provide assistance to addressing the grave humanitarian effects of APLs.

Mr. President

Of no less importance is the co-operation in dealing with explosive remnants of war. A new protocol on explosive remnants of war, which Lithuania was one of the first to ratify, will significantly reduce humanitarian risk to civilian populations.

It is also extremely important to support ongoing efforts to put an end to non-detectable mines and address humanitarian concerns caused by mines other than anti-personnel mines.

Mr. President,

From this rostrum, I wish to assure you of my Government's commitment to increasing human safety and working towards zero new victims of antipersonnel mines.

Thank you.