

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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STATEMENT

BY

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ON THE OCCASION OF THE NAIROBI SUMMIT
ON A MINE FREE WORLD

29 NOVEMBER 2004

NAIROBI

Mr. President

Allow me at the outset, to congratulate you on your unanimous election as President of the First Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and assure you that we have full confidence in your capacity to successfully guide our deliberations.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to the Government and people of Kenya for their graciously hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this capital city of Nairobi.

Mr. President,

The need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures continues to be a major challenge in the maintenance of international peace and security, and the advancement of sustainable development. The world is not a safer place today than it was a year ago. Human security is threatened by terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons, and anti-personnel mines. High hopes for a better world generated after the end of the cold war have dissipated, and in its place, fear of global cataclysm, which have haunted mankind since the dawn of weapons of mass destruction has arisen.

Conflicts continued to erupt in many parts of the world, and the old conflicts continue to defy the efforts of the international community to bring about a settlement. In these conflicts small arms and light weapons and anti-personnel landmines are used, which are no less destructive to human life than weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. President,

In the African context, antipersonnel landmines are weapons of mass destruction, as they too cannot discriminate between combatants and innocent civilians. It is indeed, a weapon that causes terrible human suffering, as well as posing serious obstacles to the reconstruction and post conflict development process. Its use therefore is contrary to international humanitarian law, which has the main purpose of safeguarding human

dignity in all circumstances. By becoming Parties to the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines, States Parties have acknowledged this and have put an end to the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of this weapon and have agreed to destroy existing stockpiles, clear mined areas and assist the victims.

It is in this context, that we urge those states still outside this Convention to accede to it.

Mr. President,

With regard to the implementation of the Ottawa Convention, it should be noted from the outset that Namibia did not hold stockpiles when the convention entered into force.

Namibia has had an extensive mine action programme in place since 1995 to clear all known regular minefields. This programme has been well supported by the US Government and has been highly successful. Under phase 1 of this programme, nine military protective minefields were cleared between 1995 and 1998. The US commercial firm, RONCO, provided post clearance quality assurance using mine detection dogs. All known minefields were declared free from mines in February 2001.

However, clearance of the nuisance mines laid by UNITA elements has been more problematic. Despite the best efforts by the Namibian Defence force to investigate, assess, survey and clear all reported incidents, there are still residual problems in certain areas.

Mr. President,

Namibia believes that the elimination of these weapons requires resources for mine clearance and social and economic reintegration of landmine victims. Assistance from those in position to do so, is always appreciated by those in need.

Finally, Mr. President, as in the other fields of arms control, arms limitation and disarmament, we believe that openness and transparency in the field of anti-personnel landmines are essential, as it can help minimize the risk of

misunderstanding, mistrust and suspicion among neighbours on which armed conflicts feed.

I thank you.