

PORTUGAL

Thank you Mr. President,

Allow me to seize this opportunity to congratulate you on your election and to wish you all the success in your endeavours.

Allow me also to congratulate Ambassador Esther Tolle as Secretary General of this Conference.

I also would like to underline the excellent organization of this summit and the way the work has progressed.

Mr. President,

First of all, I would like to express our full agreement with the views expressed by the Presidency of the EU in its statement.

From the outset Portugal has been fully committed to the purposes of the Mine Ban Treaty and is glad to restate that it has already destroyed its national stockpiles of anti personnel mines.

We all agree that anti personnel landmines are one of the major threats for civilians after the end of armed conflicts. The cruel, inhumane and indiscriminate effects of anti personnel mines can only be avoided by the eradication of those weapons. Therefore, allow me to join the previous speakers in calling upon all states that have not yet signed or ratified the Mine Ban Treaty to do so without delay.

Mr. President,

On the humanitarian side, and regarding physiotherapeutic support, Portugal has provided psychological assistance and application of prosthesis to a large number of amputated angolan children, victims of antipersonnel mines, as well as extended follow up care of children previously treated.

In the framework of its international cooperation on demining activities, Portugal has also sent skilled military personnel as advisers to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in

Angola and its military were invited as instructors in the Course of International Demining which took place in Madrid , Spain, in 2002 and 2003.

Mr. President,

For the next five years Portugal will spare no efforts both in international fora and bilaterally towards achieving the universalization of the Convention , Portugal also:

- At the request of an interested party , and through the IDD (Industry of Disarmament and Defence) is willing to proceed to the demilitarization of explosive devices using its technological capacities or by sharing experiences in these areas.
- Will continue to support and to stimulate the participation and allocation of military personnel to the UNDP, as technical advisors;
- Will continue and improve the program of physiotherapeutic support to the amputated children, victims of antipersonnel mines;
- Upon request and bilaterally will cooperate and support humanitarian demining;
- Taking advantage of the know-how of its military , Portugal could study the possibility of promoting, in the medium term, an International Demining Centre in Portugal aiming at the training of international experts in this area, having in mind the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), where landmines still constitute problem.
- I also would like to announce that Portugal will increase its financial contribution to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action.

Mr. President, I want to stress that Portugal supports the Action Plan that has been under discussion at this meeting , so that we can rapidly achieve a world free of antipersonnel mines.

And finally, let me thank the very kind hospitality of the Kenyan Government, and the logistical arrangements and facilities provided to this Conference. This is indeed in line with the policy of promoting solidarity and peace of this country.

Thank you