

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, HON. ALHAJI MOMODU KOROMA, AT THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION, IN NAIROBI, KENYA ON 3RD DECEMBER 2004.

Check against Delivery

**Mr. President of the Review Conference,
Your Excellencies
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of my Government and delegation, I would like to extend sincere thanks to the Government of the Republic of Kenya for hosting this all-important conference.

Sierra Leone as a State party exceedingly welcomes the convening of the First Review Conference on the soil of a continent that has considerably suffered from the deadly effects of a weapon that is responsible for the continuous maiming and death of the peoples of our continent.

Much as we desire a total ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of APMs within the continent of Africa, we are also concerned about the socio-economic and political fallout and the enormous humanitarian crises associated with its use everywhere. This is why we have all agreed that such a weapon needs to be stigmatized in the conscience of the public as it bears little military value when compared with the statistical data of its tragedies.

It is against this background that we took the initiative in the midst of hostilities in Sierra Leone, to sign the Mine Ban Treaty on 29 July 1998 and ratified it three years later.

Since then, and amidst considerable odds, we have not relented in our quest to ensure full compliance to the provisions of the Convention at National level, but also for its universalization. In February 2003, we completed the destruction of 959 stockpile of APMs in our military arsenals and in February 2004, though delayed, we submitted our initial transparency report in accordance with the provisions of Article 7. We expect to submit our second transparency report during the first half of next year.

We are now taking appropriate measures to formulate legislation in order to ensure full national implementation of the Convention as required by Article 9.

Although Sierra Leone has destroyed its stockpile of APMs, and is mine free, nevertheless we are plagued by the prevalence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) which continues to pose serious threat to our rural communities four years after the end of hostilities. We hope to tackle this scourge as we have done APMs.

In this regard, Sierra Leone recently acceded to the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons including and in particular Protocols II and V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

It is the wish of the Government of Sierra Leone as stated in the intersessional meetings in Geneva in February this year “...to see an expansion of the public awareness campaigns about the dangers of UXOs and similar devices.... Workshops including a wide range stakeholders and NGOs could be organized to develop strategies for dealing with the threat and for addressing the special needs of those who have been maimed by the devices”.

Sierra Leone supports the Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action 2005 – 2009 which will be adopted by this Review Conference later today. The latter is a comprehensive and consensus document, which we regard as an effective instrument to facilitate the implementation of the Ottawa Convention. Besides, most of its provisions are in consonance with the African Common Position – a regional initiative for the eradication of antipersonnel land mines from the continent.

Finally, I would like to assure this august body that Sierra Leone will continue to strive at all levels for the universal adherence to this Convention. We believe by so doing we will be able, with others, to save armed men as well as innocent civilians from the unnecessary suffering and death those weapons continue to cause.

I thank you.