



Statement by
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of
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to the Meeting of States Parties to the
First Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty

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Check Against Delivery

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Mr President,

I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of this First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention banning anti-personnel mines. Your able leadership displayed thus far leads my delegation to believe that this Conference will conclude with a successful outcome at the end of this week. I also wish to thank our gracious hosts, the Government of Kenya, for the excellent hospitality that we have become accustomed to when visiting this beautiful part of the continent. It is fitting that this First Review Conference is taking place in Africa, the most mine-affected continent in the world.

We have this week been afforded the opportunity to review the large degree of progress that has been made in eradicating anti-personnel mines in an irreversible and verifiable manner. South Africa believes that the Review Conference has not only afforded us the opportunity to commemorate and evaluate our achievements, but has also identified and recognised the challenges that remain during the next five years. Crucial to those challenges is the need for the international community to intensify efforts to mobilise resources to clear remaining mined areas and to assist those that have fallen victim to this lethal weapon.

Today we commemorate the fact that the adoption of this Convention has led to a de facto ban on anti-personnel mines.

Mr President,

In terms of the universalisation of this Convention, however, major challenges remain. Three of the Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council and a number of States in Asia and the Middle East remain outside the Mine Ban Treaty. It is further disappointing to note that two developed countries have made announcements this year that they are no longer willing to implement their earlier commitments on banning anti-personnel mines, with the world's only remaining superpower forsaking its goal of eventually banning these weapons.

On the issue of stockpile destruction, we note from the Landmine Monitor Report that sixty-two States Parties have completed their destruction obligations, thereby destroying a total of 37,3 million anti-personnel mines. However, South Africa has also noted that a number of States Parties, including some in Africa, are yet to commence with their destruction obligations, notably some of those that have recently or that are still emerging from conflict situations.

In terms of mine clearance, many affected States Parties are making determined progress, with partnership assistance, in order to meet their ten-year clearance obligations in terms of the Treaty.

In this context, Mr President, South Africa wishes to emphasise that the Treaty obliges States Parties to "destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined

areas". While affected States will naturally set priorities in terms of their clearance programmes, this cannot be done simply with a view to rendering mined areas under their jurisdiction or control "mine risk free" or "mine safe", or by postponing the clearance of mined areas deemed to be of so-called "low risk". The obligation is to clear all mined areas within the specified ten-year time period.

However, a number of States Parties in war-torn regions and those that find themselves in post-conflict reconstruction situations will continue to find this an almost impossible task without intensified co-operation with relevant partners.

I find, Mr President, therefore that, as reported by Landmine Monitor, the significant decrease in funding for mine action by prominent States Parties that have traditionally played a significant role as co-operating partners, to be of concern to South Africa. In this regard, the focus of South Africa's mine action assistance programme has been on assisting victims in Southern Africa through grants made available through the ICRC. I am pleased to note that South Africa has been able to increase these grants in recent years and that we will continue to make such contributions.

Mr President,

Those who were closely involved in the negotiations on this Treaty may recall that South Africa has historically advocated the key role that the issue of victim assistance and social and economic reintegration needs to play in mine action. This is not, as we have heard so frequently from affected States and from the survivors themselves, an issue merely of immediate care following an accident. It is a long-term responsibility that rests heavily on affected States, involving amongst others, extensive specialised medical care, socio-economic reintegration, vocational training, protection through effective disability legislation and by improving access to public facilities. It is about restoring human dignity.

Mr President,

The African Common Position on Anti-Personnel Landmines, adopted as recently as September 2004, recalled the commitment of African leaders to promote lasting peace and security, through initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). South Africa believes that peace and stability in Africa and in the whole world is a prerequisite, if we were to succeed in fighting poverty and deprivation in our continent, a challenge facing all leaders in Africa and indeed the world. The goal of NEPAD is the creation of long-term conditions for development and security on our continent, which includes building capacity in the areas of post-conflict reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. A key element in creating such conditions is for us to strive for a mine-free continent, and indeed for a mine-free world, as the title of this summit implores us to do. Let us create a better world and better the lives of our people.

I thank you.