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**ADDRESS BY CAROL BELLAMY  
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TO THE NAIROBI SUMMIT ON A MINE-FREE WORLD**

**Nairobi – 2 December 2004**

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Five years ago, the international community moved with uncommon unity and resolve to end, once and for all, the production and use of antipersonnel landmines, a weapon that cripples development and hope with the same relentless cruelty with which it kills and disables the young.

Now, in this first five-year review of the Mine Ban Treaty, we have an opportunity to focus on ways to accelerate progress toward the treaty's ultimate objective – and that is a world free of these immensely destructive weapons.

Mr. President, before I go any further, I have the pleasure of introducing Nikola Kokorus of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who has an especially gripping perspective on landmines, which begins with his memories of how they affected him as a toddler – and how they continue to affect him and his community today. This is his first trip outside Bosnia – and certainly the first time he has addressed such a forum – so I hope you will give him a warm welcome.

*[At this point, Carol invites Nikola to make his intervention. When he finishes, she thanks him extemporaneously for his eloquence and courage – and resumes her speech as written]*

As Nikola's story makes clear, one of the characteristics that make landmines so horrific is their indiscriminate nature. They do not distinguish between a soldier and child, a care-giver or military target. Thousands of children around the world have been killed or maimed by landmines – and the agony of those who survive lingers in myriad ways, from sheer pain and suffering, from discrimination resulting from disability – and in the emotional pain that attends the loss of friends and loved ones.

For more than a decade, UNICEF and its partners have been working to help protect children like Nikola from landmines and other explosive remnants of war. These efforts have included awareness raising, risk education and assistance to survivors.

But we are also deeply concerned with the appalling abuse that landmines and other indiscriminate weapons have on child rights – starting with every child's right to protection – as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Mine Ban Treaty.

Distinguished Delegates, Nikola's story is a testament that the deployment of landmines is, by definition, an egregious violation of the right of every child to enjoy a safe and happy childhood, in conditions of health, dignity and peace.

The Mine Ban Treaty explains in its preamble the determination of States Parties to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, most of them innocent and defenseless civilians and especially children – and the severe, long-term effects of landmines on development and the repatriation of refugees.

We are all here at this Summit to undertake a careful analysis of our successes and shortcomings in the realization of this aim. What can we say?

Following the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty, we in UNICEF have been able to notably increase the support we provide to mine action programmes around the world.

For UNICEF, landmine activities are wholly in keeping both with our mandate and principles proclaimed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which explicitly incorporates humanitarian law and measures to protect children and their care-givers in armed conflict – including the rights of disabled landmine survivors, like our young friend Nikola.

Yet the picture that emerges over the last five years is mixed. On one side we celebrate our successes, such as the development of new mine action programmes – and the welcoming of many new signatories to the Mine Ban Treaty. On another, we live with the knowledge that mines and other explosive remnants of war continue to plague the lives of children in more than 80 countries around the world.

Despite considerable investments in educating children and their communities about minimising the risk of mines, people in many seriously affected areas still do not have access to basic warning messages to which we all know they are entitled, nor do mine victims have access to essential medical care.

Elsewhere, Mr. President, we have seen huge strides in mine clearance and the marking of dangerous areas. Yet in recent years, in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, I have seen first-hand the terrible consequences of uncleared and unmarked landmines and other weapons of war on children and their families and communities.

In 2003 and 2004, children in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Colombia, Burundi, Sudan, and Sri Lanka, among many others, were killed and injured as a result of mines. Some of these weapons had been planted before their victims were born.

In Chechnya, my colleague Olara Otunnu, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, has estimated that of out of an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 landmine casualties in recent years, at least half were children. In Ethiopia and in Cambodia, nearly 40 per cent of all mine and unexploded ordnance casualties are reported to be children.

But as Nikola's story reminds us, statistics are only part of the story. The personal impact of landmines is unimaginably vast. Can we accept this situation because we are so far from the tragedy and have only statistics and second-hand stories? Could we accept this situation if it involved our own children? One way or the other, it is clear that

landmines continue to pose an enormous threat to the most vulnerable and deserving of our care and protection.

Simply being a child, with a child's natural curiosity and desire to play, touch, seek and explore, is risky in a mined environment. Herding livestock, fetching water, or collecting fruit or firewood can be matters of life and death. And although mines are generally designed to maim rather than to kill, when a mine explodes, a child is far more likely than an adult to die.

Moreover, a child who survives a mine blast will likely suffer permanent disability. Access to rehabilitation may not be available, and a child mine survivor may be deprived of schooling since the household does not have the money to pay for hospital and medical bills let alone the cost of education.

Mines cause household food insecurity through land denial and loss of livestock; health and hygiene problems due to lack of access to shelter, water and sanitation, and hardship due to the difficulties rehabilitating or accessing essential economic infrastructure. Taken together, these factors block local and national economic recovery and development, and undermine the fundamental human rights to peace and security, and every child's right to protection, to health and to education.

Distinguished Delegates, much of the progress that we have seen in ridding the world of the scourge of anti-personnel mines has been the result of committed partnerships between governments and civil society, including national NGOs and international organisations at every level.

Yet five years after the Mine Ban Treaty entered into force and became a moral and legal benchmark, some States still dispute the humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel landmines and refuse to sign the Treaty. This is unconscionable and indefensible. Our legal responsibilities could not be clearer. International humanitarian law requires warring parties to distinguish between combatants and civilians – and the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires States to ensure a safe environment for children.

To that end, UNICEF commits itself to support the implementation of comprehensive mine-risk education programmes, to undertake advocacy to universalise the Mine Ban Treaty, to support the formation of lasting and appropriate partnerships to realise the aims of the Treaty – and to ensure that child landmine survivors are included in public health, education and other development programmes.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates: the indiscriminate cruelty and long-term destructiveness of anti-personnel mines has reinforced a growing sense around the world that these weapons cannot be tolerated a moment longer. Now it is up to us to harness the power of that conviction, for a mine-free world is a giant step toward a world fit for children.

Thank you.