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BIURO IR KITŲ TARPTAUTINIŲ ORGANIZACIJŲ ŽENEVOJE

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Press Release

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Lithuania to host Nairobi Summit regional preparations: Regional conference to commence with final destruction of landmines

Geneva—Lithuania's Foreign Minister, **Antanas Valionis**, will host a major international conference in Vilnius next week to prepare for the *Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World*. At the **7-9 June Vilnius Seminar: Advancing the Ottawa Convention in Northern and Eastern Europe**, approximately 20 States, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and numerous other international organizations will assess progress made and ongoing challenges in the implementation of the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of antipersonnel mines.

The *Vilnius Seminar* will commence with a ceremony on 7 June at which Lithuania will destroy its final stockpile of antipersonnel mines. "Our intention is that this destruction of the last of almost 4,000 mines and discussions at the *Vilnius Seminar* will build confidence in the region and highlight our collective commitment to end the global suffering caused by antipersonnel mines," said Ambassador Algimantas Rimkunas, Lithuania's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva.

Vilnius Seminar participants will include Nairobi Summit President-Designate, Ambassador **Wolfgang Petritsch** of Austria, former President of the ICRC and current President of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, **Cornelio Sommaruga**, and representatives of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize laureate **International Campaign to Ban Landmines**.

"I am pleased by Lithuania's leadership in advancing the Ottawa Convention's humanitarian aims," said Ambassador Petritsch. "Lithuania was the first Baltic country to join the Convention – a step that Estonia has recently taken as well. My hope is that at the *Vilnius Seminar* the few remaining European states – like **Finland, Latvia and Poland** – which have not yet accepted this important humanitarian treaty will announce their plans to do so.

The *Vilnius Seminar* is one of six regional events organized to date in 2004 in advance of the 29 November – 3 December 2004 *Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World*, the name given to the Ottawa Convention's first-ever review conference. Previous activities were held in Ouagadougou, Bucharest, Nairobi, Dushanbe and Amman.

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