

DELEGATION OF AUSTRIA

Statement by

Ambassador

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**President Designate of the First Review Conference
of the
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

Thursday, 26th February 2004

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam President,

Monday – March 1, 2004 – marks the fifth anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

This anniversary will mark the count-down to *the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World* – the most significant event in the life of the Convention since it was opened for signatures. The *Nairobi Summit* will take place from 29 November to 3 December 2004 in the capital of Kenya.

I am honoured to have been chosen President-designate of this important event and it is in this capacity that I am taking the floor today. In close concert with other States Parties – particularly Kenya as host of *the Nairobi Summit* – I will try to do everything in my power to ensure the success of the Summit.

More than sixty countries continue to be affected by landmines. Many years after the end of conflicts innocent civilians still fall victim to these weapons. It is no coincidence that most of the affected countries are the poorest and least developed on earth: minefields in these countries delay the return of refugees, prevent post-conflict reconciliation and extinguish hope for socio-economic development.

In the past five years, the use of this weapon has been markedly reduced, globally, and trade has practically ceased. Few new anti-personnel landmines are being produced. Big progress has been made towards achieving the humanitarian objectives of the Convention. More than US\$ 1.7 billion has been generated to support mine clearance and assistance to victims. And more than 31 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed by the parties to the Convention.

While the global community has rallied as never before to rid the world of anti-personnel mines, much more needs to be done. Renewed dedication will be required to ensure that mines are removed from the ground. A long-term commitment is necessary to address the life-long care and rehabilitation needs of landmine survivors. Hence, the biggest challenge for the *Nairobi Summit* will be to secure the necessary political and financial commitment to continue to eliminate the humanitarian impact of anti-personnel mines.

In the few years since 1999, 141 States, including most mine-affected countries, have joined the Convention. This represents a record for a treaty of international law. The Convention has set a high normative standard that is even respected by most- though not all - non-signatories.

Significant countries still remain outside of the Convention. Their contribution to the global effort is required in order that the Convention lives up to its promise as an instrument designed to end the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines once and for all. However, given the dynamism that has characterised the universalization process of the Convention in the past five years, there is cause for optimism for the global ban on anti-personnel mines.

In this regard, and on the eve of a major anniversary in the life of the Convention, I would like to mention in particular the encouraging and positive developments that we have witnessed in the past few weeks on the Indian Subcontinent.

At their historic meeting in January in Islamabad, the Indian Prime Minister and the President of Pakistan agreed that “constructive dialogue would promote progress towards the common objective of peace, security and economic development for (their) two peoples and for future generations.” Last week, it was announced that officials from both States have established a “basic road map” for such a dialogue.

With such a road map in place, the time might be ripe for India and Pakistan to also take a fresh look at the global ban of anti-personnel mines. Many of the 141 States that have joined the Convention find themselves in complex security environments and with important obligations as part of military alliances. Yet they have all accepted that the disastrous humanitarian impact of these weapons greatly outweighs their marginal military utility.

Furthermore, eliminating anti-personnel mines can contribute to all facets of security. In 1995 for example, Peru and Ecuador fought a border war, which saw no side the victor but which resulted in untold human misery as a result of widespread landmine use. Today, mine action cooperation between the two countries has increased confidence, helped assure progress in the demarcation of a disputed frontier and has seen socio-economic gains by both sides.

More recently, leaders from Greece and Turkey took the bold confidence-building step and jointly accepted the Convention. When in 2001 they announced their intention to join the Convention, the foreign ministers of the two countries stated that they “recognize that a total ban on (anti-personnel mines) is an important confidence building measure that would contribute to security and stability in the region.”

Cooperation in solving the humanitarian problems caused by anti-personnel mines can indeed strengthen confidence between states that embark on the road to peace.

At the *Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World* in November of this year, the Convention’s States Parties will review progress and establish an action plan to ensure the elimination of anti-personnel mines. As President-designate of the *Nairobi Summit*, I therefore encourage India and Pakistan, as well as other states not party to the Convention, to join in what has become a global success story and to accede to the Convention.

I had the privilege to preside over the First Preparatory Meeting for the Nairobi-Summit on 13 February 2004. I was again greatly encouraged by the cooperative spirit and focus on progress in which the 116 represented states and the many international organisations, the UN-System and non-governmental organisations approached this work. This is a welcome contrast to some other fora in Geneva.

We are working towards an international event that will attract participation at a high political level and that aims to agree on a strong and concrete plan of action to address the humanitarian problem caused by landmines in the coming years. We expect that the *Nairobi Summit* will result in a renewed commitment for the full implementation of the Convention. And, we want to convey a rare message in today’s international relations: There is a problem that can be solved.

Thank you