

**Remarks by Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch
President-Designate of the First Review Conference**

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– Check against delivery. –

It is a great pleasure to be in the midst of such a distinguished group on the eve of a historic anniversary. Six years ago today – in 1997 – world leaders arrived in Ottawa, Canada to sign the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. And for its efforts in campaigning for such a Convention, our friend Jody Williams and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines were awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

Since the Convention was established, incredible progress has been made in ridding the world of anti-personnel mines:

- 141 States have accepted the Convention banning anti-personnel mines.
- Together these countries have destroyed almost 31 million stockpiled mines.
- Major strides have been made in clearing mined areas.
- And best of all - the number of new mine victims has fallen dramatically.

I am pleased with this progress and the unprecedented manner in which the international community has rallied to end the devastation of anti-personnel mines. But I am not satisfied that enough has been done to end the suffering caused by this weapon – suffering that I have seen through my own eyes.

I lived and worked in the Balkans – in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina before and after the wars for altogether five years up until mid-2002. While I witnessed that a great deal had been done to address the impact of anti-personnel mines, I also saw that mines continue to kill or injure civilians – children, women and men alike. And throughout Bosnia I saw the ongoing challenges faced by the almost 4,000 citizens who are permanently disabled as a result of these weapons.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are but two of more than 60 mine-affected countries and territories in the world. There was worldwide attention on these countries six years ago when the Convention was signed. I am here today to insist that this attention continue today and tomorrow. I am here to insist that the ongoing plight of landmine survivors continues to be front and centre in the global public conscience and to insist that the elimination of anti-personnel mines remains on the agenda of world leaders.

In this context, I am pleased to launch the process leading to the most significant event of the Convention since it was opened for signatures six years ago – the process leading to *the 2004 Nairobi Summit for a Mine Free World* – the label that some have started to attach to the Convention's First Review Conference – which will take place exactly one year from now in Nairobi, Kenya.

At *the Nairobi Summit*, I expect that leaders at the highest possible level will gather to do three things:

- I expect States that are in a position to do so will renew political and resource commitments to continue to eliminate anti-personnel mines, clear mined areas and assist victims – worldwide.
- I expect States that are affected by mines will vigorously implement the Convention.
- And, I expect all world leaders present in Nairobi will establish a concrete action plan to ensure the fulfillment of the Convention's aims between 2004 and 2009.

The process I'm announcing today is about ensuring that one year from now when we meet in Nairobi, the expectations I have mentioned will be met. This will be done through the following:

- I will encourage the members of this Convention on a regional basis to identify the challenges that remain and the actions necessary to ensure that the Convention fulfils its promise in ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.
- I will encourage leaders at the highest possible level to announce their intention to participate in *the Nairobi Summit*.
- And, I will urge those States that have not yet joined our common effort to accede to the Convention in time for *the Nairobi Summit*.

I am grateful for the dedication demonstrated by this country's highest level leaders to the pursuit of the aims of this Convention. The acceptance of the Convention by Cyprus is an important illustration of both the disarmament and humanitarian imperatives of the Convention. By accepting the Convention's prohibition on anti-personnel mines, you are building confidence and promoting international security. And by accepting the obligations to destroy your stockpile and to clear your mined areas, you are doing your part to ensure that these weapons do not claim additional victims.

Thank you.