

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Italy

H.E. Amb. Mario E. Maiolini

on the occasion of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention

September 17, 2002

Thank you, Mister President, and allow me at the outset to express the satisfaction of my Delegation to see you chairing the Fourth Conference of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention.

We are confident that under your skilled leadership the Conference will be able to mark another significant step forward in our common effort to free the world from the scourge of anti-personnel landmines.

Italy fully agrees with the foreign policy lines expressed by the Danish Presidency on behalf of the almost thirty Member States and Associated Countries of the European Union.

Since the Ottawa Convention has such a great importance for the impact had on every Country which ratified it, it is appropriate to underline some concepts on which our national attention is focused:

1) in Ottawa we had a breakthrough five years ago; therefore it is essential, in our meetings, to confirm - as we intend to do in the Declaration of this Fourth Meeting - the political will of the Member States to fully meet our engagements.

International policy is based on consistency and the constant reaffirmation of the undertaken engagements is of primary importance.

Italy confirms today its engagements and reminds that it has created a series of internal rules and procedures and of international financing initiatives in order to achieve the goals my country and our countries aim at. Charity, as Saint Paul says, is the bond of perfection. And the confirmation of the undertaken engagements is the bond of international solidarity.

2) There is another concept we should underline during this meeting.

The Ottawa Convention represents a main step in the development of Disarmament and Humanitarian Law.

Ottawa stands as a milestone between the old and consolidated International Law and the new Humanitarian Law. The Humanitarian Law meets with the moral aspirations of the national public opinions, which all together form the international public opinion (the one we are interested in), only if the attention and the efforts of the people are encouraged by positive results and by the moral satisfaction of success. Being successful is now our first priority.

The Humanitarian Law has its roots in this series of moral values and of perceptions of what it is right and what it is wrong according to our conscience. Ottawa is all this. It is at the same time a legal bond and a moral answer. And it is for this reason that the public opinion, together with the support of civil society, is so important in this field. We should always keep it in mind. The NGOs should help us in underlining the success and the mistakes and in keeping a close relationship between governments and public opinion.

- 3) I was underlining these general concepts because no policy can survive without the clarity of its inspirations and without the transparency of its ultimate aims.

The last consideration to point out is that the progresses in the implementation of the Convention have arisen also in this field the dialectical debate between the requirements of national sovereignty and the requirements of an international control on appropriate use by beneficiary States of the funds allocated to them.

Therefore, cooperation among the donor community, implementing agencies and host countries in planning and conducting humanitarian demining and victim assistance programs can - where necessary - be improved and possible problems consensually sorted out. This is an essential prerequisite of any effective mine action; it will deserve further in-depth analysis and careful consideration.

Mister President,

taking a quick retrospective look at the last three years, we are bound to acknowledge how far the international community has gone.

Briefly mentioning the crucial role played by UNMAS, by other UN agencies, by the GICHD and especially by Non Governmental Organisations - beginning with the

ICBL - would not do enough justice to their invaluable efforts and stunning achievements.

The history of the Ottawa Convention is so far the history of a disarmament and humanitarian success, unconceivable only five years ago.

Nonetheless, important obstacles and challenging targets lie before us.

First of all, the action of outreach towards universalization has to be strengthened towards those forty-eight States which still are outside.

Secondly, intersessional works highlighted the importance of "fine-tuning" few key definitions in the text of the Convention.

Finally, as 2004 approaches, it is time to start discussing operational preparation of the First Review Conference.

More important, the Review Conference will have to agree and detail the strategy and the road map for the following years.

It will not be an easy task, as all tasks related to mine action. Italy is ready to do its share, including its support to ISU, to the sponsorship programme and its preparedness to growing responsibilities in the intersessional work. Italy as well believes that your outstanding competence will make you the ideal President for such a demanding job.

Thank you, Mister President.