

Statement by the Republic of Estonia to the Standing Committee on the General Status  
and Operation of the Convention

9 February 2004

Geneva, Switzerland

Distinguished Co-Chairs,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to address this Committee and to share information on the developments in the Republic of Estonia regarding our accession to the Ottawa Convention.

Estonia has closely observed the Ottawa process. We endorse the objectives of the Convention and share its ultimate goal of banning anti-personnel mines. Estonia is, and has been in compliance with the provisions of the Convention since the Ottawa process was launched.

At this moment, Estonia is undergoing preparations for accession to the Convention. On 15 January this year, Estonian Government approved the draft law for accession to the Treaty, and it was submitted to the Parliament for ratification. We are committed to conclude the ratification process in the near future.

The position taken by Estonia on the issue of banning landmines is clearly demonstrated by our engagement in various activities. We support all efforts, including those within the framework of the United Nations, and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), aimed at achieving a global ban of anti-personnel mines. Estonia has provided annual – although modest - financial contribution to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action. We have voted in favor of all United Nations General Assembly Resolutions in support of the Ottawa Convention and associated ourselves with the relevant EU statements and actions. Being a state actively involved in international missions, we cannot ignore the threat posed by mines.

On the practical level, Estonia is supporting the international community's efforts to assist post-conflict recovery areas while contributing explosive ordnance disposal units to international operations. Since August 2003 Estonian Explosive Ordnance Disposal team participates in the International Security Assistance Force in Iraq. Also, we have contributed to the operation "Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan with an Explosives Detection Dog team.

In closing, let me reiterate Estonia's pledge to continue to contribute to our joint effort to rid the world of anti-personnel mines.