



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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

Nairobi, 29 November – 3 December 2004

**Declaration by Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga
President of the Geneva International Centre
for Humanitarian Demining**

I am very proud to be here in Nairobi at the First Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, because I was also present in Ottawa when, exactly seven years ago, 121 States gathered to sign the treaty banning anti-personnel mines – negotiated with the active participation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and civil society.

The partnership spirit and cooperation between these three distinct groupings of actors had allowed the preparation - over a very short period of time for normal diplomatic customs - the draft of the treaty which was adopted at the diplomatic conference in Oslo on 18 September 1997.

Since the mid 1990s, partnership, cooperation and openness have been the guiding principles for all actors involved in the implementation of the Ottawa principles. I wish that in the future we foster even more, this inclusive process and nurture the invaluable treasure we have built up over the years. The newcomers to the Mine Action community will be entrusted with this important duty.

Today, 144 States are parties to the Treaty – a historic and unique achievement. To my great satisfaction, they abide by its humanitarian obligations unconditionally, and have spontaneously provided assistance to fellow countries affected by the plague of landmines. The various achievements to date are well described in the *Review of Operations and Status of the Convention Report*.

Let me commend you Mr. President, Ambassador Petritsch, the Friends of the President, the States Parties and all other actors involved in preparing and finalising this *Review* : it is a valuable document that allows us to assess the progress achieved over the years, and to develop a common understanding of the challenges ahead.

Africa is no doubt the continent with the highest number of mine-affected countries and populations. Holding the First Review Conference here in Africa is a clear signal to the world that we have not forgotten the scourge of landmines caused to the civilian population, to child soldiers and even to military combatants.

Africa has been the cradle of mankind. In Nairobi it will also witness the renewal of our relentless commitment to achieve a world free from the threat and the impact of anti-personnel landmines, in which there will be zero new victims.

To achieve this, the ban on anti-personnel mines has increasingly to become an international norm. The *Nairobi Action Plan 2005 – 2009*, shows us the way. States from all Continents are urged to join the ban. Non-State armed groups should also embrace this international norm by signing the Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment.

When it comes to reducing the threat from, and the impact of, anti-personnel mines the destruction of existing stockpiles is only the first step, and one that is easy to achieve with military means.

However, marking and fencing of suspected areas, and more importantly clearance of mined areas will be the overriding challenge to be addressed. Several heavily mine-affected States Parties will need to produce an enormous effort to meet the deadline of 2009. They should not be left alone. It's a shared responsibility for all of us : the States Parties, the international and regional organisation, the non-governmental organisations, and any other partner able to provide human, technical and financial resources.

When it comes to assisting the victims of anti-personnel mines all of us need to translate into concrete action the vital promise contained in the Ottawa Treaty, and the moral obligation we feel as human beings. What has been achieved in building up medical and rehabilitation facilities is remarkable. Let us keep momentum and continue to be engaged in the socio-economic reintegration of landmines survivors. The continuous flow of funds is also fundamentally needed.

Finally, in order to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of mine action, we need to build on the lessons learned from the recent past. I therefore urge that mine action remains a priority in humanitarian

policies, aimed at saving lives of human beings and those most in need of assistance.

In addition, development plans and programmes should include as priorities, clearance of mined areas and assistance to victims at regional, national and sub-national level. This would be an important step in the achievement of the *UN Millennium Development Goals* by those States Parties heavily affected by landmines.

For me it's essential that the 'Mine Action Community' interacts more closely with the 'Development Cooperation Community' at UN level, national and international non-governmental organisations. Both communities can learn from each others experiences and establish a fruitful cooperation, in improvements of national and international policies on mine action and development strategies; as well as ensuring that cooperation in mine action is based on adequate surveys, needs analysis and on cost effective approaches.

To conclude, the *Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining* is proud to support the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty and of the newly adopted Nairobi Action Plan 2005 – 2009.

We stand ready to continue to provide operational support in areas where we have acquired a substantive expertise and to contribute more actively to local capacity building. We will also continue to help the mine action community with handbooks and guides intended to foster common understanding of the challenges ahead, as is the case with our bestseller *Guide to Mine Action* – soon available also in Arabic and Russian.

Moreover – last but by all means not least -, the Centre is happy to carry on services to the States Parties through the Implementation Support Unit, in accordance with the Managua mandate of 2001.
