



Statement

by

Mr. Adrian McDaid

Director for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Department of Foreign Affairs

Ireland

The Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World

29 November – 3 December 2004

Mr. President

Ireland is pleased to associate itself with the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President

Ireland was honoured to have been closely associated with the “Ottawa Process” which led to the conclusion of the Mine Ban Convention. Together with a number of other “core countries”, we worked energetically to bring this instrument into being and we remember with great pride that historic day in Ottawa in December 1997 when the Convention was signed.

At that time we recognised that the signature of the Convention was only the starting point in our pursuit of the goal of a world free of anti-personnel landmines. We also realised that the development of cooperation between governments, international organisations and non-governmental organisations was essential in order both to establish priorities for mine clearance efforts and to assess progress towards the elimination of the humanitarian threat posed by anti-personnel mines.

We held the view that the challenge facing the Ottawa Treaty was two-fold, to secure a future free of anti-personnel mines and to address the consequences of the past use of such weapons. We believed that the best approach was to pursue both of these goals together.

Mr. President

In the five years of the operation of the Convention, there has been considerable progress:

- the production of landmines has declined significantly;
- the trade in landmines has effectively ceased;
- the use of anti-personnel mines has been reduced substantially;
- the obligation to destroy stockpiles of anti-personnel mines within four years of joining the Convention has been successfully met by the states parties concerned.

Much of this progress was, as anticipated, achieved through close cooperation between governments, international organisations and non-governmental organisations. In this connection, I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those in the NGO community who have played such a vital role in the area of landmine action.

We welcome, in particular, the substantial progress in universalising the Convention, with 144 countries having become party to it. However, much has still to be done in this respect, particularly in those regions of the world where the level of accession to the Convention has been disappointing so far. The goal of universal adherence to the Convention must continue to be pursued.

Mr. President

We must also renew our commitment to meet the humanitarian challenge facing the world, by continuing to assist victims of mines while at the same time helping the affected communities to resume normal living through the removal of these mines. The presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war remains one of the largest impediments to rehabilitation and development in post-conflict society.

Since 1994, the Irish Government, through Development Cooperation Ireland - its overseas development aid programme - has been involved in funding humanitarian mine clearance operations, as well as providing support for rehabilitation programmes for mine victims and mine awareness campaigns in affected countries.

Mine clearance operations create a physical space in which rehabilitation and recovery can occur. The mine action programmes supported through Development Cooperation Ireland's emergency and recovery assistance funds are primarily determined by their relevance to the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance in terms of disaster relief and recovery in the field. Ireland attaches high importance to funding for such programmes and since 2000, has allocated over €8.8 million on a wide variety of de-mining and rehabilitation projects as part of its humanitarian assistance programmes. This funding has been disbursed through a variety of channels and has been specifically focused on countries such as Angola, Cambodia, Afghanistan and Mozambique which have been particularly badly affected by landmines.

Ireland channels its funding through international agencies and NGOs who have both the capacity and experience to deliver effective assistance in this area, and who work with local communities in assisting them to build local capacity and local ownership of such programmes. One such partner is Halo Trust which for the past decade has been one of Ireland's key partners in relation to de-mining activities. In 2003 Ireland commenced a more strategic long term support initiative for the organisation through the allocation of annual block grants for activities in four countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Eritrea and Somalia.

This approach provides Halo Trust with the flexibility to better prioritise needs and to engage in more long term planning. Development Cooperation Ireland also supports Handicap International and other NGO partners for individual mine action programmes.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that Ireland remains committed to providing continued appropriate mine action support in our humanitarian interventions.

Mr. President

The importance of this Conference is that it provides a forum not only for reflecting on the results of the past five years but also for planning for the future and setting targets in a structured way. I feel sure that the outcome of the Conference will contribute substantially to the implementation of the Convention in the five years to come and help lay the foundation for reaching our ultimate goal of a world free of anti-personnel landmines.

Thank you Mr President