

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

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STATEMENT

by

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

Nairobi, 29 November-3 December 2004

Mr. President,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Serbia and Montenegro, at the outset, I would like to express our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Kenya and H. E. President Mwai Kibaki, for their warm hospitality and to congratulate them on the successful organization of the Conference. Also, I would like to extend my Government's sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for the extraordinary and immense effort that you and "Friends of the President" put into the elaboration of the documents for the First Review Conference.

My delegation aligned with the statement presented by the European Union Presidency. I would, therefore concentrate only on a few specific points relevant to the implementation of the Convention by my country.

Mr. President,

I have the honour to represent one of the "youngest" States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. Serbia and Montenegro acceded to the Convention on 18 September 2003, assuming all obligations of a State Party on 1 March 2004. By accession of Serbia and Montenegro, the Convention is now applicable in the whole region of South Eastern Europe. We consider this as an important development, which will contribute to the strengthening of confidence and further stabilization of our complex region.

We became a state party to the Convention towards the end of this first review period. Nevertheless even before that we endeavoured to act in line with some of the major objectives of the Convention. The transfer of anti-personnel mines ceased some years ago. Demining of areas mostly located in the border zones began immediately after the end of the conflicts in our region.

Now that the Convention entered into force for us, the relevant internal legislation is being amended. In order to carry out demining projects, mine action centers have been established.

I am particularly pleased to inform you that the project for the destruction of APM stocks in Serbia and Montenegro, which was initially developed in February 2003, and presented to the Standing Committee of the Ottawa Convention, is in the final stages of its preparation. This project is developed with the support and assistance of a group of donor countries led by Canada as well as the NAMSA agency. It is envisaged that the realization will begin in the spring of 2005, and that 1.3 million APMs in our stock will be destroyed in less than three years.

The demining process is now underway in Serbia and Montenegro. The main obstacle in this regard is the lack of financial resources. In addition to the need to demine certain parts of the country, we are facing another

serious problem. Vast areas of Serbia and Montenegro are contaminated by unexploded ordnance (UXO), that should be removed. UXO presence in tourist, agricultural and urban areas poses great danger and is priority in our future activities.

With regard to demining, I would like to emphasize especially the importance of a regional effort - the "Mine-Free Regions Initiative: the Example of Mine Free South Eastern Europe by 2009". This initiative strengthens regional cooperation among the Southeastern European countries and confidence of the donor countries aimed at fulfilling the common goal- a mine-free region of South Eastern Europe. On its part, Serbia and Montenegro will continue activities to implement joint projects such as the already launched initiative of demining part of its border areas with two other SEE participating countries - Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. We hope that assistance from ITF in Slovenia and from the EU will be forthcoming.

All these efforts and activities are aimed at creating a secure environment for civilians, at reducing the risk of suffering and meeting the essential humanitarian objectives of the Convention. At the same time, significant attention has been devoted to the assistance to the victims of anti-personnel mines. An ambitious rehabilitation project developed by health experts has also been initiated in Serbia and Montenegro. The aim is to create one integrated system of prevention, protection and preparation for social re-integration of all APM victims within 3 years by allocating the necessary funds of approximately EUR 900.000. This project requires international financial and expert assistance in establishing databases, procurement of orthopedic aids and in creating jobs for the victims.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to reiterate full readiness of Serbia and Montenegro to continue with the implementation of the Ottawa Convention in the next five-year period, in line with the documents adopted here in Nairobi.

This Review conference provided new and strong impetus for all of us to further pursue noble goals of the Ottawa Convention. The existing unique partnership of Governments and the civil society, of donors and mine-affected countries, should be further strengthened. Positive momentum created by the obvious success in the implementation of the Convention in the past five years should be utilized in the time ahead of us, so that in 2009 we can say that we are much closer to achieving the objective of a mine-free world.

Thank you Mr. President.