

Press Release
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SECRETARY-GENERAL NOTES 'REMARKABLE PROGRESS' MADE

SINCE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF MINE BAN CONVENTION

The following statement was issued today by the Spokesman for Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

The Secretary-General met today with Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, President-designate of the 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 on Their Destruction (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention), to be held at the United Nations Office in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004.

The Secretary-General congratulated Ambassador Petritsch on his nomination as President-designate of the Review Conference and pledged the full support of the United Nations for the universalization of the Convention.

The Secretary-General noted that remarkable progress had been made since the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention came into force five years ago. Already 141 countries have adhered to the Convention. Production, sale and transfer of anti-personnel mines have almost stopped; over 30 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed; and large areas of mined land have been cleared and returned to productive use. Nevertheless much remains to be done. Fifty countries are yet to join the Convention, and there are still an estimated 15,000 new victims of these deadly weapons each year.

The Secretary-General assured Ambassador Petritsch that he would urge governments to participate at the highest possible level in the high-level segment of the Review Conference. The Secretary-General has designated the Director of the Geneva Branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs to be Executive Secretary of the Review Conference.

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