

TOWARDS A MINE FREE PACIFIC

OPENING REMARKS BY  
THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF VANUATU

DELIVERED BY JOHN SHING, POLITICAL ADVISOR TO THE  
MINISTER

3 MAY 2007 – PORT VILA

**OPENING REMARKS**  
**3-4 MAY 2007, LE LAGON, PORT VILA**

GUDFALA MONING LONG YUFALA AND WELCOME TO VANUATU AND TO "TOWARDS A MINE-FREE PACIFIC".

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VANUATU, I AM EXTREMELY PLEASED TO BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER A FEW SHORT REMARKS TO OPEN THIS TWO-DAY REGIONAL WORKSHOP TO ADVANCE THE AIMS OF THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION – ALSO KNOWN AS THE OTTAWA CONVENTION.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT I ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THE PARTIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE THIS MEETING. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE GENEVA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DEMINING FOR THEIR STRONG SUPPORT IN ORGANISING AND CONTRIBUTUNG RESOURCES TO THIS REGIONAL WORKSHOP.

VANUATU BECAME A STATE PARTY TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION IN 2005 AND LAST YEAR SUBMITTED ITS FIRST REPORT TO THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL. MANY PEOPLE QUESTION WHY VANUATU, A COUNTRY THAT DOES NOT PRODUCE, USE OR HAVE LANDMINES, HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION. THE SAME COULD BE SAID FOR MANY OF THE STATES REPRESENTED AT THIS MEETING.

MANY OF OUR GOVERNMENTS HAVE INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO PEACE AND SECURITY, BOTH INTERNATIONALLY AND REGIONALLY. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT OUR GOVERNMENTS PROTECT, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, OUR PEACEKEEPERS AND OUR PEOPLE FROM DESTRUCTIVE AND INDISCRIMINATE WEAPONS SUCH AS LAND MINES. ACHIEVING UNIVERSALITY

OF THIS CONVENTION AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION, THEN, SHOULD BE OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORKSHOP IS TO TAKE STOCK OF THE UNIVERSALISATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTICIPATION CHALLENGES OF THE CONVENTION, AND TO FIND PRACTICAL AND COST-EFFECTIVE WAYS TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES.

WE HOPE THAT BY HAVING CONVENEED THIS WORKSHOP, PIF MEMBERS STATES – PARTICULARLY THOSE WHICH ARE PARTIES TO THE AP MINE BAN CONVENTION – WILL FEEL THAT EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO PROVIDE THEM WITH A FORUM TO EXPRESS THEIR NEEDS AND VIEWS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION.

WE HOPE THAT THIS WORKSHOP IS NOT AN END IN ITSELF BUT RATHER A STARTING POINT FOR STATES IN THIS REGION TO WORK TOGETHER AND TO REACH OUT TO THOSE OUTSIDE OF THE REGION TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES ON AN ONGOING BASIS.

WE ALSO HOPE THAT THOSE STATES IN THE REGION WHICH ARE NOT YET PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION WILL CONSIDER INITIATING PROCESSES WHICH WILL SEE THEMSELVES ULTIMATELY ACCEDING TO THE CONVENTION.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE NOT BEEN TO VANUATU BEFORE, I HOPE THAT THIS WORKSHOP ALSO PRESENTS YOU WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE ANOTHER PART OF OUR BEAUTIFUL REGION.

WITH THESE BRIEF REMARKS, I, ON BEHALF OF THE VANUATU GOVERNMENT, WOULD LIKE TO NOW DECLARE THIS WORKSHOP OFFICIALLY OPEN. I WISH YOU ALL SUCCESS IN YOUR DELIBERATIONS DURING THESE TWO DAYS.

THANK YOU.