

**Meeting of the Standing Committees established under the Convention on  
the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-  
personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

**9 – 12 February, 2004, Geneva**

**Statement of Sri Lanka**

Mr. Co-Chair,

At the outset, on behalf of the observer delegation of Sri Lanka, let me congratulate the Co-Chairs and the Co-Rapporteurs of the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention, on their well-deserved election.

Although Sri Lanka remains outside the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, it has always, in principle supported the humanitarian objectives of this landmark international instrument.

The Government of Sri Lanka has embarked on a comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme with a broad objective of making Sri Lanka a mine free country by the end of 2006. The cease-fire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE signed in February 2002 has greatly facilitated the implementation of this programme. A National Steering Committee for Mine Action has been setup under the Chairmanship of the Secretary to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to coordinate this comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme. The National Steering Committee consists of the representatives of relevant government agencies, donor community, the United Nations and a number of humanitarian organizations engaged in humanitarian mine action in Sri Lanka. There are also three Area Mine Action Offices that provide decentralized operational coordination directly to the affected areas.

Mr. Co-Chair,

As far as Sri Lanka's accession to the Ottawa Convention is concerned, the Government continues to keep the issue in full view. In his address to the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2002, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka stated that (I quote) "*Sri Lanka is reviewing its position on the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines with a view to becoming a party to it as confidence in peace accrues*" (end of quote). At the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, last year, Sri Lanka supported, as it has done in the past, the resolution calling for the universalisation of the Ottawa Convention.

Sri Lanka, as an observer, made a statement at this meeting of Standing Committees in May 2003. The statement, while explaining Sri Lanka's position on its accession to the Ottawa Convention, provided a detailed account on humanitarian de-mining work carried out in the country. Sri Lanka also participated, as an observer, at the Fifth Meeting of State Parties held in Bangkok in September, 2003.

Mr. Co Chair,

Inter-ministerial consultations are being held with a view to an early accession of Sri Lanka to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including its Amended Protocol II on Landmines as a first step towards fulfilling government's commitment to effectively address the issue of landmines. We are also exploring the possibility of sharing information, as appropriate, under Article 7 of the Ottawa Convention,

Sri Lanka welcomes the efforts made by the Geneva Call, which recently visited Sri Lanka and had a series of meetings with parties concerned with a view to facilitate Sri Lanka's accession to the Ottawa Convention.

There have been positive developments the country has been experiencing with regard to the use of landmines, since the signing of the cease-fire agreement in

February 2002. No mines have been laid in the country by the security forces, which have, in fact, handed over more than 3000 minefield records to the UNDP. The humanitarian de-mining force of Sri Lanka Army, which is the major contributor to the country's demining process, continues to carry out the demining activities. Furthermore, the Government of Sri Lanka has taken all measures to ensure that humanitarian mine action activities of local and international humanitarian organizations are carried-out without any disruption in not only the Government controlled areas but also the areas under the LTTE control.

As a result of humanitarian mine action programmes undertaken by these organizations and the Sri Lanka Army, the number of mine related incidents reported in Sri Lanka has dropped from 15-25 to 7-10 per month.

Mr. Co-Chair,

The Government of Sri Lanka will continue to work with all concerned to achieve its target of making Sri Lanka mine free by the end of 2006 and also to work towards its possible accession to the Ottawa Convention. In that context, the Government of Sri Lanka will continue to share its experience in a transparent manner, with the international community in achieving the common goal that we all share, a world free of landmines!

Thank you.