

Opening of the week of meetings of the Standing Committees

**Ambassador Stephan Nellen
Director, Geneva International**

13 June 2005

Thank you Wolfgang.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen, Friends: I wish to extend to you a warm welcome to Geneva and to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

I join Wolfgang in being pleased with the fact that Nairobi resulted in momentum rather than a let-down.

Nairobi wasn't the end of something. Rather it was the beginning of increased efforts on the part of States Parties and others to ensure that the Convention indeed lives up to its promise.

In a sense, the meetings this week are serving as a first means of preparing for your Second Review Conference in 2009.

And it is a great pleasure for the GICHD to host these meetings.

The GICHD has been with you from the start – since the first Intersessional Work Programme in 1999.

In my view, this unique forum is more important than ever in the post-Nairobi world. There is, as Wolfgang has stated, a need for urgency in our work.

And thus I encourage you to make full use of the meetings this week as flexible, informal and dynamic means to bring the Convention's cooperation and assistance provisions to life.

Ensuring that you can participate actively has been facilitated in part by the European Commission, which has continued its partnership in supporting these meetings by providing interpretation in English, French and Spanish.

In addition, thanks to a contribution provided by Canada, Russian interpretation will be provided on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible during the course of the week. To this end, I wish to remind you of the invitation I have extended to all delegates to the reception that I will host tomorrow at 18:15.

With that said, I will not prolong matters as I know you are eager to get down to work.

I wish you the best for a successful week.

I will now call upon the Co-Chairs and Co-Rapporteurs of the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention to commence their meeting.