



**ITALIAN PRESIDENCY  
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**FIFTH MEETING  
OF STATES PARTIES  
TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION**

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**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Carlo Trezza  
Permanent Representative of Italy  
to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva  
on behalf of the European Union**

**BANGKOK  
15 – 19 September 2003**

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MISTER PRESIDENT,

1. I HAVE THE HONOUR TO TAKE THE FLOOR ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. THE ACCEDING COUNTRIES CYPRUS, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, ESTONIA, HUNGARY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, MALTA, POLAND, SLOVAKIA AND SLOVENIA, THE ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES BULGARIA ROMANIA AND TURKEY ALIGN THEMSELVES WITH THIS STATEMENT.

2. AT THE OUTSET ALLOW ME TO CONGRATULATE YOU, MISTER PRESIDENT, FOR YOUR ELECTION TO CHAIR THIS MEETING. I AM CONFIDENT THAT UNDER YOUR LEADERSHIP OUR WORK WILL ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL PROGRESS.

MISTER PRESIDENT,

3. THE FIFTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE MINE BAN CONVENTION WILL HAVE TWO MAIN TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH, BOTH OF GREAT IMPORTANCE: TO ASSESS PROGRESS OF THE CONVENTION, AND TO ADOPT DECISIONS ON THE PREPARATION OF THE FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION, WHICH WILL BE HELD IN NAIROBI, FROM 29 NOVEMBER TO 3 DECEMBER 2004.

4. AS FAR AS THE LATTER ASPECT IS CONCERNED, I WISH TO EXPRESS THE APPRECIATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE OUTSTANDING WORK DONE BY AMBASSADOR JEAN LINT OF BELGIUM, ACCORDING TO THE MANDATE RECEIVED AT THE 2002 MEETING OF STATES PARTIES. HIS PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND PERSONAL DEDICATION HAVE PROVED TO BE ESSENTIAL IN FACILITATING THE CONSOLIDATION OF A CONSENSUS ON PROCEDURAL AND SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS RELATED TO THE ORGANISATION OF THE REVIEW CONFERENCE.

5. THE EUROPEAN UNION CONSIDERS THE CONVENTION'S FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE TO BE AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE TO TAKE STOCK OF WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR IN IMPLEMENTING THE CONVENTION, WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE, AS WELL AS TO RENEW THE COMMITMENT OF STATES PARTIES IN ERADICATING THE INHUMANE EFFECTS OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SUCH A POSITIVE OUTCOME, THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE REVIEW CONFERENCE NEEDS TO BE SUBSTANTIVE AND WELL STRUCTURED. THE EUROPEAN UNION LOOKS FORWARD TO THESE DISCUSSIONS AND PLEDGES ITS FULL SUPPORT AND COOPERATION TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL REVIEW CONFERENCE.

MISTER PRESIDENT,

6. SINCE THE FOURTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES, HELD LAST YEAR IN GENEVA, IMPORTANT PROGRESS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN THE UNIVERSALISATION AND FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION. 8 STATES HAVE RATIFIED OR ACCEDED TO THE CONVENTION,

AND OTHERS HAVE TAKEN SIGNIFICANT STEPS TO DO SO IN THE NEAR FUTURE. AS OF TODAY, 136 STATES HAVE RATIFIED OR ACCEDED TO THE CONVENTION, AND AN ADDITIONAL 12 STATES HAVE SIGNED BUT NOT YET RATIFIED. NEVERTHELESS, THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT OUR TASK IS COMPLETED, AS THERE ARE STILL MORE THAN 50 STATES THAT HAVE NOT YET ACCEDED TO THE CONVENTION.

7. CONSISTENT WITH ITS COMMITMENT TO UNIVERSALISE THE MINE BAN CONVENTION, THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS CARRIED OUT MORE THAN 50 DEMARCHES TO PROMOTE THE WIDEST POSSIBLE ADHERENCE TO THE PRINCIPLES ENSHRINED IN THE CONVENTION AND TO ITS PROVISIONS. THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS URGED STATES NON-PARTY - INCLUDING THOSE STILL RETAINING CONSPICUOUS STOCKS OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES - TO PROMPTLY ACCEDE TO THE TREATY AND TO ATTEND THE CURRENT MEETING OF STATES PARTIES.

8. AT THE SAME TIME, THE EUROPEAN UNION COMMENDS EFFORTS MADE BY OTHER STATES PARTIES TO THIS END, AND ACKNOWLEDGES THE IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY THE UNIVERSALISATION CONTACT GROUP. DUE CONSIDERATION SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ENGAGING IN A DIALOGUE WITH NON STATE ACTORS THAT USE ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES.

MISTER PRESIDENT,

9. THE SUCCESS OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION IS HIGHLIGHTED ALSO BY OTHER FIGURES, AS IMPORTANT AS THOSE RELATED TO ITS UNIVERSALISATION. SINCE 1997, THE PRODUCTION AND TRADE IN ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES HAVE STEADILY DIMINISHED. AS OF TODAY, 94 COUNTRIES (COMPARED WITH 75 IN 2002) HAVE EITHER COMPLETED THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR NATIONAL STOCKPILES OF APLS OR DID NOT POSSESS STOCKPILES WHEN THE CONVENTION ENTERED INTO FORCE. APPROXIMATELY 30 MILLION APLS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED SO FAR. THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS IN MINE AFFECTED COUNTRIES CONTINUES TO DECREASE, WHILE THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO MINE CLEARANCE, VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND AWARENESS RAISING INCREASED FROM 230 MILLION US DOLLARS IN 2001 TO 300 MILLION US DOLLARS IN 2002.

10. THE INTER-SESSIONAL MECHANISM ESTABLISHED AT THE FIRST MEETING OF STATES PARTIES, STRUCTURED IN FOUR STANDING COMMITTEES, CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO ACHIEVE THOSE POSITIVE RESULTS. IT PROVIDES THE APPROPRIATE FORUM TO DISCUSS - AMONG MEMBER STATES, NON STATES PARTIES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND OF CIVIL SOCIETY - RELEVANT ISSUES RELATED TO THE UNIVERSALISATION AND THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION. IT IS WORTH NOTING, IN THAT RESPECT, THAT 126 STATES WERE REGISTERED AS PARTICIPANTS IN EITHER THE FEBRUARY OR MAY 2003 INTER-SESSIONAL MEETINGS, INCLUDING 30 COUNTRIES THAT HAVE NOT YET FORMALLY ADHERED TO THE CONVENTION.

MISTER PRESIDENT,

11. DESPITE THOSE ACHIEVEMENTS, WE CAN NOT IGNORE THAT UNDIMINISHED EFFORTS AIMED AT ERADICATING ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES WORLDWIDE ARE STILL REQUIRED. RELIABLE FIGURES INDICATE THAT IN 2001 - 2002 LANDMINES CASUALTIES WERE REPORTED IN 70 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW VICTIMS IS ESTIMATED BETWEEN 15.000 TO 20.000 PER YEAR. IT IS APPALLING THAT APPROXIMATELY 70% OF REPORTED CASUALTIES WERE CIVILIANS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN, OFTEN WELL AFTER THE END OF ARMED CONFLICTS. FURTHERMORE, ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES HAVE SEVERE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES. THE MUTILATION OF VICTIMS PLACES A HEAVY BURDEN ON AFFLICTED COUNTRIES ALREADY STRUGGLING TO REBUILD THEIR SOCIETIES AND MAKE ENDS MEET. MOREOVER, THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES PREVENTED FROM RETURNING TO THEIR HOMES DUE TO ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES IS A RECURRENT CHALLENGE. POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION, ECONOMIC RECOVERY, SOCIAL RESTORATION AND DEVELOPMENT ARE THEREBY SERIOUSLY HAMPERED. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE CONTINUED USE OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES BY NON STATE ACTORS CONTINUES TO BE A CAUSE FOR GRAVE CONCERN. THE EUROPEAN UNION EXPRESSES THE HOPE THAT ALL NON STATE ACTORS WILL CEASE THE USE OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES AND WILL SIGN THE DEED OF COMMITMENT FOR ADHERENCE TO A TOTAL BAN ON ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND FOR COOPERATION IN MINE ACTION, AS PROVIDED FOR BY GENEVA CALL.

12. THIS IS WHY SUPPORT TO INTERNATIONAL MINE ACTION RANKS TODAY AMONG THE POLITICAL PRIORITIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, WHICH WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO CONDEMN THE INDISCRIMINATE CHARACTER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES, TO RECOGNISE THE UNBEARABLE SUFFERING THEY IMPOSE ON CIVIL POPULATIONS AND TO TAKE CONCRETE ACTION TO CURTAIL IT.

MISTER PRESIDENT,

13. THE EUROPEAN UNION BELIEVES THAT SUCH A COMPLEX PROBLEM SHOULD BE TACKLED THROUGH THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION AND BY PROVIDING AN UNDIMINISHED FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO MINE ACTION.

14. IN PARTICULAR, THE TIMELY RESPECT OF OBLIGATIONS AND DEADLINES SET BY THE TREATY FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF NATIONAL STOCKPILES AND THE CLEARANCE OF MINED AREAS CONSTITUTES A CRUCIAL ELEMENT. ADHERENCE TO TRANSPARENCY MEASURES AND TO PROCEDURES SET FOR FACILITATION AND CLARIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE, AND IN PARTICULAR THE ADOPTION OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES ARE ALSO ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO ENHANCE CONFIDENCE AMONG STATES PARTIES AND PREVENT PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES.

15. THE FULFILMENT OF OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE CONVENTION AND MINE ACTION SUPPORT BOTH SEEK TO REDUCE THE HUMAN SUFFERING CAUSED

BY ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES. THE EU WOULD IN THIS CONTEXT ALSO LIKE TO RECALL THE CCW THAT COMPLEMENTS THE MINE BAN CONVENTION IN THE FIELD OF WEAPONS THAT ARE PARTICULARLY CRUEL AND INHUMANE.

16. THE EUROPEAN UNION IS CONVINCED THAT EFFECTIVE MINE ACTION REQUIRES, AS A NECESSARY PRE-CONDITION, A COMPREHENSIVE AND BALANCED APPROACH COMBINING MINE CLEARANCE, STOCKPILE DESTRUCTION, VICTIM ASSISTANCE, CAPACITY BUILDING AND MINE RISK EDUCATION. IN SO DOING, SUSTAINABILITY AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP OF HUMANITARIAN MINE ACTION SHOULD BE PROMOTED.

17. ENHANCED COOPERATION AMONG DONOR AND RECIPIENT COUNTRIES, AS WELL AS FULL OWNERSHIP OF AFFECTED COUNTRIES, REMAIN KEY FACTORS FOR THE SUCCESS OF INTERNATIONAL MINE ACTION ACTIVITIES. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE EUROPEAN UNION COMMENDS THE EFFORTS AND THE COORDINATION PROVIDED BY THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION SERVICE (UNMAS), THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC), THE GENEVA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DE-MINING (GICHD) AND THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO BAN LANDMINES (ICBL).

MISTER PRESIDENT,

18. THE UNWAVERING COMMITMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IS DEMONSTRATED BY ITS CONSTANT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO INTERNATIONAL MINE ACTION. IN 2002, OVERALL EU FUNDING - EARMARKED BY MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY - AMOUNTED TO 145 MILLION EUROS. IN THAT RESPECT, I DRAW THE ATTENTION OF COLLEAGUES ON THE BROCHURE CONCERNING EUROPEAN UNION MINE ACTION IN THE WORLD. THE BROCHURE, WHICH HAS BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO DELEGATIONS, COVERS HUMANITARIAN MINE ACTION UNDERTAKEN AND SUPPORTED WORLDWIDE IN 2002 BY THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES.

19. IN A BROADER PERSPECTIVE, IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY PLEDGED 240 MILLION EUROS FOR THE PERIOD 2002 - 2009, MATCHING THE STANDARDS OF MAJOR DONOR COUNTRIES. FOLLOWING TWO AD HOC REGULATIONS ADOPTED IN 2001, THE EC MINE ACTION STRATEGY AND MULTI-ANNUAL PROGRAMMING FOR 2002 - 2004, ENDORSED LAST YEAR, REPRESENTS THE APPROPRIATE MID-TERM OPERATIVE FRAMEWORK TO COORDINATE AND PRIORITISE EUROPEAN-FINANCED PROJECTS IN THIS SPECIFIC FIELD. AS ALREADY INDICATED, THIS EFFORT IS COMPLEMENTED BY NATIONAL FUNDING BY EU MEMBER STATES.

20. IN PARTICULAR, THE EC MINE ACTION STRATEGY - BY FOCUSING ON FIVE MUTUALLY REINFORCING COMPONENTS (ADVOCACY TO STIGMATISE THE USE OF APLS AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR TOTAL BAN, MINE RISK EDUCATION, MINE CLEARANCE, VICTIM ASSISTANCE, STOCKPILE DESTRUCTION) - IS FULLY COHERENT WITH THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION STRATEGY FOR 2001-2005.

21. I WISH TO REAFFIRM THAT THE EUROPEAN UNION WILL PRIORITISE ITS FINANCIAL AID TOWARDS THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH ADHERE TO THE

PRINCIPLES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION. MEMBERSHIP OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION AND STRICT COMPLIANCE WITH ALL ITS PROVISIONS REMAIN A CRUCIAL ELEMENT IN DIRECTING RELEVANT EU FUNDING.

22. HOWEVER, THE EUROPEAN UNION MAY CONSIDER PROVIDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT ALSO TO STATES NOT PARTY TO THE MINE BAN CONVENTION, SHOULD HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES ARISE. AS IN THE PAST, THIS SUPPORT WILL BE CONTINGENT UPON PROVEN POLITICAL WILL BY THE RECIPIENT COUNTRY TO MOVE TOWARDS ACCESSION TO THE CONVENTION.

MISTER PRESIDENT,

23. ALLOW ME TO UNDERLINE ONCE MORE THE DECISIVE ROLE PLAYED BY NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE "OTTAWA PROCESS", WHICH INDEED IS CHARACTERISED BY THIS UNPRECEDENTED INTER-ACTION AND FRUITFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY.

24. FINALLY, I WISH TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE COURAGE OF DE-MINERS AND OF ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN MINE ACTION, WHOSE DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE OF A WORLD FREE FROM ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES OFTEN EXPOSES THEM TO THE MOST SERIOUS DANGERS.

MISTER PRESIDENT,

25. THE NEGATIVE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF LANDMINES ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FABRIC OF SEVERAL COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED OVER THE LAST YEARS. NONETHELESS, THE ONGOING WIDESPREAD SUFFERING OF MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE STILL PREVENT US FROM BEING FULLY SATISFIED. THEREFORE, THE EUROPEAN UNION - WHICH REMAINS ON THE FOREFRONT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION - IS READY TO JOIN ITS EFFORTS WITH THOSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE COMMON ENDEAVOUR TO FREE THE WORLD FROM THE SCOURGE OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES AND OF THEIR INDISCRIMINATE EFFECTS.

THANK YOU, MISTER PRESIDENT.