

Embassy of the Czech Republic in the Kingdom of Thailand

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**STATEMENT BY H. E. Dr. MARTIN KOŠATKA,
POLITICAL DIRECTOR OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, AT THE FIFTH MEETING
OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION
(BANGKOK, SEPTEMBER 16, 2003)**

Mr. President,

First of all, let me congratulate you on behalf of the Czech delegation on your election to chair this meeting. My delegation is convinced that under your leadership the participants will achieve considerable progress in their negotiations.

Let me also thank the Government of Thailand for hosting the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties. Being aware of the importance of the Mine Ban Convention for the Asian continent, we appreciate very much Thai leadership in its implementation.

The Czech Republic fully identifies with the statement of the European Union. I wish to stress that we unequivocally condemn the indiscriminate character of anti-personnel mines that are still threatening innocent people in a number of countries. That is why we wholeheartedly support the EU Mine Action Strategy which is fully in compliance with the UN Mine Action Strategy for 2001 – 2005. It outlines an optimal framework for the utilisation of available resources in a coherent manner by supporting total ban of anti-personnel landmines, promoting mine risk education, organising mine clearance, victim assistance and stockpile destruction.

The goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines can only be achieved through the universalisation and full implementation of the Ottawa Convention. The EU demarches promoting adherence to the Convention and its provisions, with which the Czech Republic as a country participating at the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy fully identifies, are important contribution to the effort to achieve this goal.

Mr. President,

Since 1997, the Mine Ban Convention has been showing clear evidence of being the right framework to achieve the goal of putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. Previous speakers have highlighted positive developments: growing

number of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, millions of mines destroyed world-wide, completed destruction of national stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines in many States Parties, decreasing production and trade in mines and most importantly – decreasing number of victims.

In spite of that, in quite a large number of regions anti-personnel mines continue to endanger significantly civilian population, thus undermining national economic development. They have enormous capability of injuring, maiming and killing especially defenceless victims. Unless this changes, we must pursue our mine awareness and de-mining efforts and promotion of the widest possible accession to the Convention.

The Convention gives guidance on how to move forward to eradicating this evil, although the practical success of its aims significantly depends on unrelenting efforts of the international community. I would like to stress that these efforts can only be successful if properly co-ordinated, embracing stockpile destruction, mine clearance, victim assistance, mine risk education and capacity building. The Czech Republic highly appreciates the co-ordination efforts made by the United Nations Mines Action Service together with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-mining and the International Committee of the Red Cross. At the same time, we share the view of those who give special prominence to the reporting according to Article 7 of the Convention, a measure which helps significantly to raise transparency of the Ottawa process. Let me also reiterate that the Czech Republic is ready to share its expertise and technologies with others in a spirit of co-operation to facilitate compliance by States Parties.

With regard to the issues which remain to be solved I would like to say a few words on the question of anti-vehicle mines. In our opinion, anti-vehicle mines do not fall within the scope of the Ottawa Convention. Article 2 of the Convention gives a clear definition of what constitutes an anti-personnel mine and does not ban sensitive fuses that may have unintended effect. However, the Czech Republic, being aware of the diversity of views on this issue, is ready to explore the question of banning all mines other than anti-personnel mines within the scope of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts in Geneva. Having said this, I would like to stress, that if the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention find it more appropriate to discuss the problem within this forum, we will not be against this effort.

Mr. President,

Already at the Third Meeting of the States Parties in Managua in 2001 the Czech delegation announced that we had completed, in an environmentally friendly way, destruction of our national stockpile of anti-personnel landmines in accordance with the Ottawa Convention. Let me inform you that in the framework of the current reform of the Czech armed forces, it was decided to eliminate all useless and old-fashioned ammunition, including some types of anti-tank and anti-vehicle mines, and to replace them by newer, less dangerous devices.

Our support for the common goal - the universalisation of the Ottawa Convention - is strong. I have already mentioned our support for recent EU demarches. On a bilateral basis,

problems connected with the implementation of the Convention were discussed with Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, Ukraine and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia..

Allocation of funds to several de-mining operations in mine affected countries can serve as a proof of our commitment to the international mine action. Let me mention:
de-mining of access areas to drain ditches near the Lukavac river in Croatia (\$ 50 000);
contribution to the NATO Trust Fund in Albania (\$ 10 000);
donation of two KMT 6 de-mining facilities to the Government of Lebanon (CZK 310 000).

Mr. President,

My delegation will join efforts of all participants to make this Conference a success, a springboard for preparations of the First Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention.