



**FIFTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
MINE BAN TREATY**

**15-19 SEPTEMBER
BANGKOK, THAILAND**

STATEMENT BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION

Mr President,

Allow my delegation to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. I am sure that under your leadership, our deliberations on the annual review of our work will set the tone for our preparations for the First Review Conference of the Convention. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and co-operation to ensure the success of this Meeting. My delegation also wishes to thank the Government of Thailand for hosting this Meeting as part of its enduring commitment and contribution to achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines. At the same time, South Africa warmly welcomes the offer by the Government of the Republic of Kenya to host next year's Review Conference.

My delegation would also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium, for the skilful manner in which he guided the work of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties. We would also like to express our appreciation to the transparent manner in which he has undertaken his mandate in conducting informal consultations in preparation for the Convention's First Review Conference.

The South African delegation welcomes the nomination of Ambassador M. Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria as President-designate of the First Review Conference. The South African delegation offers him its full support and co-operation in his endeavours in preparation for the Review Conference.

Mr President,

This meeting is the final annual Meeting of States Parties before the First Review Conference and in that context, we have some important decisions to make. This meeting also reviews the intersessional work programme for the past year and my delegation is pleased with the important progress that we have made in covering those specific areas of work.

South Africa wishes to recall that in terms of the mandate of the Standing Committees as agreed to in Maputo in 1999, the role of the intersessional work programme should be an essential element in maintaining a momentum and cohesion behind global humanitarian mine action efforts. In South Africa's view it is a fact that the outcome of the work of the Standing Committees will have a substantial impact on the outcome of the First Review Conference, especially in relation to the overview of the implementation of the core humanitarian objectives of the Convention in key areas such as victim assistance, clearance of mined areas and stockpile destruction. However, consideration would have to be given to the role that the intersessional work programme needs to fulfil following the First Review Conference and leading up to the Second Review Conference.

At the same time, Mr President, we need to reiterate that this is a unique, informal mechanism and it should retain its character. Opportunities for States Parties to discuss any particular issue or need should be maximised and not restrained by formality. This will

continue to facilitate the pursuit of creative solutions or the rendering of advice on such matters and will enhance opportunities for partnerships to be built amongst States Parties.

Given the informal nature of the Intersessionals, it may also be worth considering giving a stronger regional perspective to these meetings. In this manner, a specific Intersessional or part thereof may be set aside to discuss the situation in a particular region, with the focus shifting to the other regions on a rotational basis for successive Intersessionals.

My delegation is also willing to consider any practical proposals that may be put forward on how to structure the Convention's intersessional work programme, as well as Meetings of States Parties after the First Review Conference, with a view to streamlining the overall work programme. This would enable us to channel much-needed financial resources to mine-affected countries and specifically in areas where they are most needed, such as victim assistance, as well as in meeting deadlines for mine clearance and stockpile destruction.

South Africa is taking due consideration of the fact that the success of the Convention would be judged by those affected by anti-personnel mines in terms of fewer casualties, assistance provided to those in need and areas cleared of mines. The ultimate trust would be the resumption of normal life in affected communities and the total elimination of anti-personnel mines. South Africa therefore believes that our intersessional work programme needs to be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances and priorities.

In terms of Article 9 of the Convention on "National implementation measures", South Africa has sought to operationalise the Mine Ban Convention by preparing domestic legislation known as the "Anti-Personnel Mines Prohibition Bill". It has been approved in terms of South Africa's legislative processes and is now awaiting signature by the President into a fully effective and legally binding Act.

Mr President,

My delegation is pleased to note that forty-six of the fifty-three African countries have either ratified or acceded to the Convention. Our continent's leaders are actively promoting the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This vision for Africa maps out the promotion of long term conditions for development and security on our continent, which includes building capacity in the areas of post-conflict reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. In a continent with the largest mine problem, mine action remains one of the key components of post-conflict reconstruction.

In conclusion, Mr President, my delegation believes that in our preparations for the First Review Conference and in setting the agenda for that meeting, we should commemorate and evaluate our achievements and also identify areas where further resource mobilisation is required. We should not forget that our ultimate goal remains that of ridding the world of anti-personnel mines.

I thank you.