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Embargo : 16 September 2003, 6.00 pm

Speech by

**Ambassador Christian Faessler
Head of the Swiss Delegation**

5th Conference of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty

16 September 2003, Bangkok

Mr President,

Delegates of the States Parties to the Convention,

Representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr President, on your election. Both your country's and your own personal commitment to action against mines and in favour of the Mine Ban Treaty have been key elements in the success of our work. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that you can rely on the wholehearted support and the complete cooperation of my delegation.

Mr President,

Even though four years have now passed since the convention came into force, enormous efforts are still needed to reduce and eventually to rid the world of the terrible humanitarian burden of anti-personnel mines. Some estimates claim that there are still between 45 and 60 million anti-personnel mines in the ground and another 220 million stockpiled in military arsenals. 136 countries have to this day ratified this convention, and 9 more have signed it and are awaiting ratification. The first review conference, which will be held in Nairobi next year, will be an incentive for us to redouble our efforts to promote the universalisation and the implementation of the MBT. We must also urge states which are not party to the agreement to sign it as soon as possible. In this context my delegation was pleased to hear of the recent ratification by Belarus, a country with substantial stocks of anti-personnel mines.

Mr President,

Universalisation plays a key role in our efforts to implement the convention and to free humankind of the scourge of anti-personnel mines. My delegation would like to express its sincere gratitude to the government of Thailand for its efforts to persuade South East Asian states to adhere to the convention as soon as possible.

Since the MBT came into force, the States Parties have come to realise that the success of our efforts to achieve its universalisation and implementation presupposes that all factors be taken into account. The use of anti-personnel mines by non-state actors is one such key factor. This is reflected in the Managua Declaration and was re-affirmed in even stronger terms in the declaration by the fourth Assembly of States Parties in Geneva. Switzerland considers that on the eve of the first review conference it is now time to analyse and to discuss this issue

seriously and in depth. My country is willing to make its contribution and it will take advantage of our meeting to suggest the setting-up of an informal open reflection group on the issue of non-state actors.

Mr President,

Mines kill, maim and cause terrible suffering. On top of that, they impede reconstruction and the renewed cultivation of land, and they complicate the work of peace missions. This is a major problem particularly for the poorest countries. As a result, they cannot comply with the convention time frame - in particular the objective of complete elimination of mines within ten years - without outside aid. Switzerland is keen to see that this deadline is met. It therefore intends to maintain its financial commitment to humanitarian demining at a level of around ten million dollars and to work strenuously to help mine-affected countries to comply with the provisions of the convention.

Mr President,

Although the convention has been and remains a crucial vehicle for promoting the notion of assistance for victims, my country has always believed that this assistance must be given by means of an integrated approach which exploits synergies to the full. More specifically, there is undoubtedly a convergence of objectives and of interests between measures against mines and measures within the wider context of human security. Within the context of measures against mines, it is essential to build on the efforts made by the Human Security Network. The Human Security Network, consisting of 13 states, including Switzerland, considers assistance to victims as one of its objectives, alongside the fight against AIDS and the problem of child soldiers. My

country will campaign strongly to ensure that the issue of anti-personnel mines remains a priority domain within the activities of the Network.

Mr President,

Geneva has become the centre of international activity against mines – an honour which benefits the reputation of Switzerland as a whole. Up to now, Switzerland has hosted two States Parties' conferences and eight inter-sessional meetings within the framework of the implementation process. I would also like to mention the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, which in recent years has become a powerhouse of competence and documentation appreciated throughout the world. The same is true of its *Implementation Support Unit*, which makes a notable contribution to the implementation process. Switzerland therefore invites the States Parties to the Convention to continue to take advantage of the Geneva infrastructure and to draw on the wealth of knowledge available in this city.

Mr President,

The first deadlines for the elimination of stockpiles will expire at the end of 2003 for some 80 countries. We have every reason to be pleased at the punctuality with which the deadlines have been complied with so far. The time frames established by the convention are perfectly realistic and feasible. Switzerland, which this year has been co-chair of the Standing Committee for Stockpile Destruction, would like to thank and to congratulate all parties who have contributed to this positive result. Full compliance with the deadlines for the destruction of stockpiles is a key element in the universalisation and implementation of the convention. Switzerland therefore invites all States Parties to redouble their efforts to

destroy stockpiles so that this objective is achieved before the review conference in Nairobi.

Mr President,

The MBT is based on the humanitarian conviction that civilian populations have to be protected from the insidious and uncontrollable danger of anti-personnel mines, and that even in times of conflict civilian populations are entitled to a minimum of human security. However, the convention and the activities which flow from it open up possibilities that go beyond the humanitarian dimension. In fact these projects can also be used to serve the interests of peace in a more general sense, for example, by appointing mixed demining teams to promote reconciliation. Demining campaigns and the definition of demining zones can also play their part in restoring trust between conflicting parties. As part of efforts to achieve a peace settlement, a demining plan can be an easily negotiable item because it is of interest to all the parties in a peace process. It is up to us to devise ways of making anti-mine measures serve the wider goal of peace, over and above their humanitarian role and their impact on development.

Mr President,

The convention is a splendid example of joint international action – the only way of combining our strengths to improve human security in the world. It is therefore essential that we do not let up in our efforts.

Mr President, thank you for your attention.