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GENERAL STATEMENT OF CAMBODIA

by

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to the

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Mr. President,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Distinguished Delegates

It is indeed my great honour on behalf of the Cambodian Delegation and the Royal Government of Cambodia to address this fifth meeting of the states parties. But first allow me to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to leadership of the fifth meeting of the states parties. We trust that under your leadership, this meeting will be significantly productive. I also would like to express our deepest appreciation to Kingdom of Thailand for their outstanding contribution for hosting this very important

Conference which aims to further the implementation of the Mine ban Convention.

Mr. President:

Cambodia is one of the world's most heavily land mine and UXO contaminated nations, resulting from numerous conflicts over the past 30 years. Close to half of all country villages are mine/UXO-affected, and the suspected contaminated areas are almost half a million hectares. In 2002 a total of 841 persons; with 429 during the first semester 2003, were injured or killed by mines/UXOs, one-third of the victims were children in the countryside, especially in mined areas which, unfortunately, are indispensable for the new settlement of poor people. Those of them who survive, join the estimated 36,000 landmines victims of the country.

The Royal Government is indeed committed to the Ottawa Convention. We were the first country on globe to pass national legislation to ban landmines. During the past year Cambodia served as a Co-Rapporteur with Japan for the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technology and of course Cambodia is prepared to play the role as the Co-Chair of this Committee.

Mr. President

There is an increasing understanding amongst the government, the mine action community, and donors that mine action is an integral part of the wider rehabilitation and development activities. Cambodia Mine Action Strategy,

issued this year, plans to address development and pro-per prioritisation, within the broader framework, to develop mine risk reduction and to reinforce organizational structure for victim assistance. The key priorities are to increase mine clearance for high and medium mined impacted areas, to integrate mine action in development and poverty reduction strategy and to reinforce mine awareness in order to drastically diminish the number of victims by the end of 2004.

Poverty in Cambodia has many determinants including issues such as lack of access to productive assets such as land and the depleted rural infrastructure. Obviously, the large number of mines and UXO directly contribute to the problem, and are a major hurdle to human and food securities and the economic reintegration of returnees and landless populations. The Cambodian Government has developed a national poverty reduction strategy paper to ensure that the identification and prioritisation of land and services/infrastructure for clearance at the Provincial level with closer coordination and planning; the handover of cleared land to intended beneficiaries after clearance, managed and monitored in a participatory manner and driven by the most vulnerable communities with more attention given to the victims.

Mr. President,

We are not alone. We are inspired by previous distinguished delegates, that strengthening partnerships is vital in order for us to carry out this crucial mission. With this

in mind, the Government of Cambodia has hosted and/or organized a series of international and regional conferences and seminars, one of which was held recently last March as the regional seminar, *Building a Cooperative Future for Mine Action in South-East Asia*. The purpose of the seminar was to further enhance mine action cooperation and coordination in South East Asia amongst governments, operators and donors. May I take this opportunity to extend on behalf of the Royal Government our gratitude to Australia, Canada, Japan, Norway who have provided financial support to the Seminar, and in particular, to the 4MSP President, Ambassador Jean Lint who was always guiding me. At the meeting, the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted his encouragement for ongoing cooperation in the region and the importance that the UN attaches to mine action.

The Regional Seminar has highlighted that cooperation was central to the establishment of the Convention and that it continues to play an important role in implementation. It was noted that significant progress is being made towards the achievement of the Convention's core humanitarian aims: clearing mined land, assisting victims, destroying stockpiled anti-personnel mines and universalising the ban on AP mines. The Convention's States Parties were encouraged to maximise opportunities to share information on implementation and on means to mobilise resources, and avoid unnecessary competition. Furthermore, it was the spirit of the meeting how the Convention serves as a framework for partnership, a means to work more comprehensively and a

catalyst for mobilising resources. Suggestions were made for partnerships that could be undertaken by States not party to the Convention to signal that they are on the path towards eventual acceptance of the Convention. And we are optimistic that the States not party to the Convention in the South East Asian region would continue to take steps towards eventual formal acceptance of the Convention.

Finally Mr. President it is my Prime Minister's policy, who always takes mine action with his personal interest has said "we all must prepare for the Convention's First Review Conference in 2004", and that for his "Zero Victims" policy Cambodia can complete mine clearance in accordance with the Convention's time-lines as long as support is sustained and capacity continues to increase to an acceptable level. I personally am confident, as we enter the second decade of mine action in Cambodia that the spirit of this Meeting will help to ensure that mine action activities are focussed in the right place, with sufficient resources, as long as they are necessary. As always, may I also take this special opportunity to express our profound gratitude to all donors who always keep confident with mine action operations in our Kingdom.

In conclusion, Mr. President, my delegation pledges our support to you in ensuring that this meeting provides a meaningful contribution as part of our inspiration to achieve our common goal of creating a world free of landmines.

Thank you.