

**Statement of The Chinese Observer Delegation at the Fifth
Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention**
(15-19 September 2003, Bangkok)

Mr. President,

It is an honour and a pleasure to have this opportunity to address the Conference. First of all, please allow me to congratulate you on behalf of the Chinese delegation on your election to the presidency of this Conference. I am convinced that with your outstanding diplomatic skills and experience, you will steer the Conference to a success. The Chinese delegation will cooperate fully with you.

Mr. President,

Time passes by, yet mankind's steps of progress has never stopped, thanks to the infinite wisdom and strength of the human race, and the lives of men, both material and spiritual, have undergone constant and enormous enrichment. But mankind also has its weak side. It is vulnerable before wars and disasters, which jeopardize human security and compromise human dignity. Throughout human history, tremendous and unremitting efforts have been made in pursuit of security and dignity. From *the St. Petersburg Declaration* and *the Geneva Conventions*, one can see the greatness of mankind and the progress it has made, testifying that humanitarianism, an important symbol and core element of our civilization, has become the common aspiration of all modern states. It is this common spirit of humanitarianism that we discern in *the Ottawa Convention*, which came into being five years ago, signifying a new and important effort to preserve human safety. It is for this reason that we applaud the objective in the Convention.

Mr. President,

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to humanitarian issues and supports the efforts by the international community in addressing the humanitarian problems caused by landmines. As a nation with a long history of civilization, China has a tradition of caring for people's safety, as expressed in the ancient aphorism: people are the foundation of a state, whose living must be cared for and lives cherished. The new Chinese leadership also put much emphasis on the safety of the

people and have stressed on many occasions that people's safety must be placed above anything else.

As a defensive weapon, landmine is one of the means for states to defend themselves and resist foreign invasion. Unfortunately, due to their inherent features, landmines, if misused, also pose a threat to the lives of civilians, thus giving rise to humanitarian concerns. There is no denying that banning anti-personnel landmines (APLs) can be the ultimate way to prevent them from injuring civilians and address the humanitarian concerns arising thereof. To those states that have chosen to do so, we express our respect and appreciation. Although China is not a party to *the Ottawa Convention*, we endorse and share its objective, that is, to take all effective measures to eliminate the humanitarian concerns caused by APLs and protect the safety of civilians. And as the saying goes, every road leads to Rome. We have, in our own way, spared no effort for the realization of that objective.

In 1998, China acceded to *the amended Landmine Protocol of the Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons*. The Protocol strikes the right balance between the humanitarian concerns and sovereign states' needs for self-defense. China has faithfully implemented the obligations under the Protocol, by exercising stringent controls over landmines from its production to use and taking extreme caution and prudence in the actual use of landmines within its borders. Furthermore, China adheres to a national defense policy of "active defense", which rules out the possibility of deployment of landmines abroad. In other words, we are working in the same direction as all states present here.

Mr. President,

We are of the view that in addition to banning or restricting the use of landmines, which can serve to prevent new problems, there is a more pressing task before us, which is to clear those landmines that are already implanted in the field so as to eliminate the existing threats to civilians around the world. Having basically cleared all the landmines on its territory, China is, in recent years, taking an active part in international demining assistance programs aimed at helping the affected countries solve their landmine problems.

In 1998, China donated 100,000 US dollars to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for the Assistance in Mine Actions, earmarked for the demining operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1999 and 2000, the Chinese

Government, in cooperation with the UN, sponsored two demining training courses for personnel from mine-stricken countries such as Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia and Rwanda. In 2001, the Chinese Government donated mine detection and clearance equipment worth of 1,260,000 US dollars to such mine-stricken countries as Angola, Cambodia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia and Rwanda. In 2002 and 2003, China sent two groups of demining experts to Eritrea for on-site training and instruction on demining and donated a large number of mine-clearance equipment, in order to help the latter enhance its own demining capabilities. A total of 120 Eritrean deminers were trained, who, at the end of each training course and under the instruction of the Chinese trainers, cleared a number of minefields safely and efficiently. This year, China joined the Mine Action Supporting Group headquartered in New York, in order to better participate in international demining assistance programs and enhance its cooperation with other countries.

However, as a developing country, China is limited in its financial resources for demining assistance. Through domestic demining operations and the training and demining activities in Eritrea, China has accumulated abundant experience and a large number of well-trained and well-experienced demining personnel. Meanwhile, through practice, we have also explored and established a complete set of demining methods applicable to a variety of geographical environments, and have developed a series of safe, efficient, easy-to-use and inexpensive demining equipment. Such comparative advantages in terms of personnel, technology and experience give us the confidence to participate in international demining assistance activities more extensively and effectively. We are ready to enhance our exchanges and cooperation with the United Nations and all interested countries, and explore new ways to fully utilize our expertise in this area for the benefit of mine-stricken countries, so that they can get rid of the landmine problem as soon as possible.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, by wishing the Conference a complete success.

Thank you for your attention.