

Address by the President of the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties

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28 November 2005

Your excellencies, distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is both an honour and a privilege to have been elected President of the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties of *The Convention on the Prohibition, of the Use, Stockpiling Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction*. This is the first time that the Meeting is taking place in Europe, outside of Geneva, and we are honoured that it is being held in Zagreb, Croatia. From the very beginning Croatia was a strong supporter of the Ottawa Process and one of the forty original signatories to the Convention. Accordingly, I am pleased to accept this great responsibility, and I will do my best both to guide this meeting to a successful outcome and to provide leadership in the coming year.

It is especially pleasing to take over the presidency where Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch has left off. He has served us well and the Convention is in good shape. However, to paraphrase Ambassador Petritsch, while progress has been made, great challenges remain. As President of the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties, I am committed to ensuring further progress in overcoming the challenges that we face in the year ahead.

One year ago, at the *Summit on a Mine Free World*, we, States Parties to the Convention agreed to 70 concrete actions to guide our efforts over the coming five year period. Taken together these 70 actions lay out a comprehensive framework for achieving “major progress towards ending, for all people for all time, the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines”. As such, the Nairobi Action Plan underscores the supremacy of the Mine Ban Convention. To ensure the effectiveness of the Action Plan as a means of guidance, it is logical that we regularly monitor the progress made in the pursuit of its aims and continue to identify the challenges that remain. Doing so is what the Zagreb meeting is all about.

The centre-piece of this assessment of progress is the Zagreb Progress Report, which has been developed under the leadership of Austria and Croatia through a collaborative process that has involved a wide range of actors. This morning, I invite you – I invite all of us - to spend the next five days working to enhance and improve what is already a powerful and important document. I am sure that we will do so, and, that by the end of this week, we will welcome the Zagreb Progress Report as our guide for the year ahead.

The Zagreb Progress Report is important because, not only does it monitor progress, it also takes stock of what remains to be done. The message is clear: we must act with urgency if we are to live up to our commitments under the Convention.

- We all have a responsibility to continue universalization efforts – considering that 47 States have not yet accepted the Convention’s comprehensive approach to ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines. We should also continue to promote universal observance of the Convention's norms by also including armed non-state actors.

- Those 13 States Parties in the process of destroying stockpiled anti-personnel mines must complete their stockpile destruction programmes, as soon as possible, but definitely in time to meet their four year deadline .
- Urgency is also required on the part of the 46 States Parties which must fulfill their obligations of clearing all anti-personnel mines from mined areas under their jurisdiction or control. We are all aware that this is the most significant challenge to be addressed in the coming four years.
- And, if we are going to make a difference in the lives of landmine survivors, those 24 States Parties with the largest number of casualties need to proceed in a more concrete, specific and systematic manner in order to develop measurable and meaningful objectives.

Meeting these challenges requires us to place at the forefront what I consider to be the cornerstone of this Convention: responsibility and cooperation. As sovereign States, **we are responsible** for what happens within our borders and that includes, above all, the well-being of all our citizens. In the context of this Convention, this means that States Parties like Croatia, which have reported mined areas and a significant number of mine victims, are ultimately responsible not only for clearing all mines, but also for ensuring the rehabilitation and reintegration of mine survivors. Taking this responsibility seriously, Croatia provides from its own resources more than 80 percent of all funds devoted to mine clearance. At the same time, recognizing that education and employment are the key to the rehabilitation of mine victims, Croatia has also established in Rovinj the Regional Center for Psycho-Social Rehabilitation - "Duga". It is our hope, that the example of Croatia can encourage other mine affected countries to do what they can, to solve themselves, the main problems that – we - mine affected states, all face.

Of course, fulfilling the heavy responsibilities that we have accepted under this Convention, requires, for many of us, the **cooperation of the international community**. The hundreds-of-millions of dollars that have been generated in recent years are a testament to the degree to which those in a position to do so, have provided assistance to those who need it. However, if recipient States Parties with scarce means demonstrate the seriousness with which they take their responsibilities – for example, by developing national demining programmes, by financing what they can from national sources or by developing national victim assistance strategies – those in a position to do so must answer the call for assistance.

I would also briefly like to turn your attention to the Zagreb Declaration which presents an attempt to clearly and briefly outline both – the positive results achieved in the application of the Convention and the Nairobi Action Plan, but also the challenges that remain. The Declaration is open for your comments and suggestions and I hope that by the end of this week we will be in a position to adopt a concise, but strong and meaningful Declaration.

To conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, having gathered here in Croatia, a heavily mine-affected country in one of the most mine-infested regions of the world, it should be abundantly clear to us all, that urgency is required. It was just a short time ago that this region found itself in conflict. Now, every State in South Eastern Europe has joined the Convention, accepting the responsibility to end the human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines in this

region and the responsibility to ensure that there never again will be suffering caused by this weapon in this part of the world or elsewhere.

I wish you – I wish all of us - the best, as we set about our work this week in Zagreb. I am confident that, with the spirit of responsibility and cooperation that has prevailed since the Convention was adopted in Oslo eight years ago, the outcome of this gathering will be a success. .