



Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

PRESIDENT OF THE FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE

Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria

**Opening of the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties
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Some of you might recall that in my final statement in Nairobi on December 3, 2004, I made it clear that the work starts now. I am glad to say that over the past year, we have made major advances in pursuing the aims of the Nairobi Action Plan, although, of course, significant challenges remain. Through the adoption of the Action Plan we made action and urgency a central feature of the Convention for the next five years. By applying the 70 concrete action points, we indeed will ensure continued and necessary progress in universalization, stockpile destruction, mine clearance and victim assistance.

Meeting in Zagreb, we acknowledge the leading role of our host-country in the fight against those terrible weapons. This can be seen both on a national level, that Croatia works hard to fulfil its obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty and internationally, by assuming the responsibility of the Convention's presidency at a crucial point in time.

At the end of my tenure let me draw your attention to various highlights.

First, Universalization: At the close of the Nairobi Summit, 143 States had ratified or acceded to the Convention. Subsequently, Ethiopia, Vanuatu, Latvia and Bhutan have Parties to the Convention.

There are now 147 States which have formally accepted the Convention.

I am pleased that universalization efforts have continued apace. This is an important manifestation of actions #1 through #8 of the Nairobi Action Plan in which we agreed that "universal adherence will remain an important object of cooperation among States Parties." It is important to continue to universalize as 47 States still remain outside of the Convention, including some that continue to use, produce, develop or and maintain large stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. Likewise, I appreciate that 5 States not Parties to the Convention have voted in favour of this year's First Committee resolution on the implementation of the Convention for the first time: Azerbaijan, China, Kuwait, Lebanon and Micronesia.

Regarding **stockpile destruction**, the States Parties agreed in the Nairobi Action Plan to sustain progress in order to meet "the Convention's humanitarian aims and disarmament goal."

Since the Nairobi Summit considerable progress has been made. While Ethiopia and Latvia recently joined the Convention and have been added to the list of now only 13 States Parties which must destroy stockpiled anti-personnel mines, Bangladesh, Uruguay, Mauritania, Guinea Bissau and Algeria have all indicated that they have now fulfilled their stockpiled destruction obligations. However, due attention must still be given to overcome the challenges identified by the Nairobi Summit, *including that) some States Parties do not possess the financial means to destroy their stockpiles of anti-personnel mines and that in some situations it may be difficult to find and account for all stockpiled anti-personnel mines that are under the jurisdiction or control of a State Party.*

With respect to **clearing mined areas**, we agreed in the Nairobi Action Plan that successfully meeting deadlines for mine clearance "will be the most significant challenge to be addressed in the coming five years". This will require intensive efforts by mine-affected States Parties and those in a position to assist them." At the close of the Nairobi Summit, 47 States Parties were still in the process of fulfilling mine clearance obligations.

22 States Parties have clearance deadlines that fall on or before 1 January 2010. We must place an intensive focus on this matter. Five States Parties have already reported fulfillment of their Art. 5 obligations well within a ten-year period. This gives us hope the other States having the same obligation, will be able to do the same.

Please allow me to recall that Article 5 is a cornerstone of the Convention. It makes it clear that addressing only part of the impact of anti-personnel mines is not only insufficient; it is inconsistent with the legal obligations contained in that provision. That is to say, once again, “all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under (a States Party’s) jurisdiction or control” must be cleared – whether they pose humanitarian problems, have a development implication or concern peace building, reconciliation and disarmament.

The Convention calls for States Parties to provide **assistance for the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of mine victims**. The Nairobi Action Plan notes that “this constitutes a vital promise for hundreds of thousands of mine victims around the world, as well as for their families and communities.”

We made a major gain in Nairobi in focusing our attention on 24 States Parties with significant numbers of landmine survivors. We noted that “these States Parties have the greatest responsibility to act, but also the greatest needs and expectations for assistance.” It will be necessary to ensure the full application of actions #29 through #39 in the Nairobi Action Plan to make a real and meaningful difference in the lives of survivors in these and other countries.

The Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance embarked on an important exercise of assisting the 24 States Parties in question in developing concrete and measurable objectives for 2009. While great progress was made in 2005, much more must be done. States Parties that have started to establish objectives should continue to do so. Those which have already established good objectives must now develop good plans. And plans established by these 24 States Parties must be implemented and supported to ensure a real improvement the quality of life of survivors.

In the Nairobi Action Plan, we recognized that fulfilling our obligations will require substantial political, financial and material commitments. Since Nairobi, we have noted that great sums of money continue to be generated for mine action. However, much of the funding is directed to a few beneficiary countries. In addition, while there have been renewals of commitments to provide resources, in some instances when States Parties have been close to having fulfilled their obligations under Article 5, funding appears to be drying up.

In Nairobi, we also noted that **cooperation and assistance** is about a lot more than simply money: It’s also about finding new sources of support and ensuring that finite resources are well spent. In this regard, it is imperative that we continue to explore ways that resources can be used in the most efficient and effective way, particularly by drawing upon the experiences of field-based mine action actors.

In the Nairobi Action Plan we also recognized that **transparency and an effective information exchange** will be crucial to fulfilling our obligations. In the lead-up to the Nairobi Summit, we achieved a reporting rate that exceeded 80 percent. This year, the reporting rate stands at 65 percent. It is essential that the States Parties comply with their annual reporting obligations, particularly those States Parties that are in the process of destroying stockpiled mines, clearing mined areas, retaining anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 3, and undertaking measures in accordance with Article 9.

Also with respect to the exchange of information, we agreed “to provide information on the plans requiring the retention of mines (in accordance with Article 3) for the development of and training in mine detection, mine clearance, or mine destruction techniques and report on the actual use of retained mines and the results of such use.” Since the First Review Conference, 17 States Parties have volunteered such additional information as a complement to the information they are required to provide on this matter.

Colleagues and Friends,

Most of what I have said should not be new to you as it is contained in the draft Zagreb Progress Report which was distributed to you on 3 November. The Zagreb Progress Report signifies an innovative approach to adjusting our working practices to the post-Nairobi environment. We now have a five-year guide to action. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to monitor on a yearly basis the application of this guidance and to establish priorities for each year ahead.

Not only is the content of the Zagreb Progress Report important, but so is the process that was used to develop it. The preparation of this document was characterized by openness and transparency – with all States Parties and other interested actors invited repeatedly to offer input. In addition, as we have stressed continuously since June this year, when we first launched the idea of having such a report, this document was drafted in a collaborative manner with a wide range of actors taking the lead on various sections.

Let me close by remarking further on the matter of collaboration. My efforts as President of the First Review Conference and Chair of the Coordinating Committee would not have been nearly as productive without the support of so many collaborators. I wish to thank in particular, those who served as Friends of the President in Nairobi and the Co-Chairs of the Standing Committees, as well as my two closest collaborators over the past two years, Alexander Kmentt and Markus Reiterer. Allow me also to personally thank Kerry Brinkert, Sophie Delfolie and Catherine Borrero from the ISU for the excellent cooperation we had during the last two years and for their unwavering support to me.

In addition, I wish to express my sincere thanks to a close friend of all of us, and creative mind, Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium. I am extremely grateful that Jean had the confidence in me to propose that I serve as the President of the First Review Conference. In fact, we all owe Jean a debt of thanks for ensuring the success of Nairobi and beyond. It was Jean, after all, who was the architect of the Nairobi preparatory process and of concepts like the legendary “4Ps”¹ which have been instrumental in guiding our work.

I also wish to thank our Executive Secretary and friend, Mr. Enrique Roman-Morey, who – I have been informed – will leave his present posting as Deputy Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament and Head of UNDDA, Geneva Branch, for other important diplomatic assignments. I speak on behalf of all of us, in wishing you, Enrique, all the best for your future endeavors.

Finally, I wish to offer my commitment of support to Croatia as it embarks in presiding over the Convention in the coming year. While many challenges remain, I am confident with that such solid leadership and the fine example in implementation provided by Croatia we are all in very good hands, indeed.

Thank you very much.

¹ The “4Ps” is a conceptual approach to assisting States Parties in the process of fulfilling obligations in maximizing information sharing opportunities. The “4Ps” are: problems, plans, progress and priorities for assistance.