

Statement of Sri Lanka
at the Seventh meeting of the State Parties to the
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of
Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction
18-22 September 2006, Geneva

Madam President,

On behalf of the observer delegation of Sri Lanka, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of this meeting. The delegation of Sri Lanka would like to take the floor under this agenda item to provide a brief account of its position with regard to the Ottawa Convention as well as the on-going humanitarian de-mining activities in the country.

Sri Lanka, as a mine-affected country, is fully aware of the threat posed by anti-personnel mines, particularly on the lives of innocent civilians. Sri Lanka has always acknowledged the humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Convention by supporting the implementation of the resolution on this subject at the UN General Assembly, every year. As apart of Sri Lanka's continued commitment for the implementation of this resolution, Sri Lanka will soon be providing an update to the Article 7 Report, which was submitted on voluntary basis for the first time in 2005.

Sri Lanka is also a Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including the Amended Protocol II on landmines. We hope to submit a report on the implementation of the Amended Protocol II at the forthcoming meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in November this year.

At national level, the National Steering Committee for Mine Action is mandated to implement a comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme with the aim of making Sri Lanka a mine free country by 2008. With the assistance of all stakeholders, local and international, the National Steering Committee is committed to implementing this progarmme in a sustainable, well-coordinated and responsive manner to meet the needs of the beneficiaries. This programme is also aimed at strengthening local capacities to manage an effective mine action programme with minimum external support.

Sri Lanka is hopeful that a conducive environment for it to accede to the Ottawa Convention would be created sooner than later as we make progress in the peace process. In this regard however, we have noted with concern several reports received with regard to new mines laid by the LTTE. During their on-going efforts to facilitate voluntary resettlement of IDPs, the security forces have confronted with new minefields laid by the LTTE.

The Government of Sri Lanka appreciates the efforts being made by the UN and other humanitarian organizations, in particular the Geneva Call, to encourage LTTE to sign the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment and cease the production and use of anti-personnel mines. However, we believe that any Deed of Commitment, which may be signed by LTTE in the future, should contain an effective foolproof verification mechanism to ensure that this non-State entity ceases all production and use of anti-personnel landmines and their stockpiles are destroyed.

Sri Lanka is committed to the humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Convention and is ready to engage the international community in a transparent manner as it moves towards the accession of this Convention and to achieve the objective of making the country free of mines by 2008.

Thank you
