

**Statement by Mr. Norachit Sinhaseni,
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
On General Exchange of Views (Item 10)
at the Ninth Meeting of States Parties
to the Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, Switzerland
24 November 2008

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to present my warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the 9th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention. My delegation pledges to fully cooperate with you to make this meeting a successful one. Let me also take this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to H.R.H. Prince Mired Raad Al-Hussein, President of the 8th Meeting of States Parties, for his exemplary leadership to universalize and promote implementation of the Convention. In particular, I would like to commend his efforts as the facilitator in the arduous and lengthy process of Article 5 extension request considerations.

Since the entry into force of the Mine Ban Convention ten years ago, there have been many notable achievements, as well as tough challenges. The collective progress toward a “mine-free, zero-victim” world is truly a “learning by doing” process. It relies on the cooperative spirit among States Parties, international organizations, and NGOs that has long been the feature of this Convention. Their determination and commitment to humanitarianism are behind the notable accomplishments of the Convention as a one-of-a-kind international disarmament treaty.

Mr. President,

Now that the Convention is entering its second decade, it is embarking on a new phase. Implementation of obligations under the Convention will be the main focus of this upcoming period. Currently, we are witnessing a significant number of States Parties facing two main challenges in implementation – namely meeting the deadlines on mine clearance and victim assistance.

First, several States Parties are finding themselves unable to meet their mine clearance deadline, despite their earnest and diligent efforts. In the consideration of States Parties' extension requests over the course of the week, we must proceed in the spirit of cooperation and understanding that is the feature of this Convention. As one of the countries requesting Article 5 extension, Thailand is here to speak frankly about the obstacles and difficulties we face. Although hard and difficult work remains, barring any major unforeseen obstacles, Thailand is confident that we would be able to fulfill our Article 5 obligations within the nine and a half year requested extension period.

The second major challenge is for the twenty-six States Parties with the highest number of landmine survivors to carry out the Nairobi Action Plan before the agreed deadline of the Second Review Conference. As a State Party with a large number of landmine survivors, Thailand believes that cooperation by all stakeholders is crucial to advance the agenda on victim assistance. Thailand's success in victim assistance has been the result of extensive government-NGO partnership. From our experience, victim assistance is technical and knowledge-intensive. As Thailand will assume the position of co-Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance for the period following this 9th MSP, we encourage States Parties in a position to render technical and financial assistance to those states having difficulties on victim assistance to do so. It is in the interest of all member states to see that the commitments under the Nairobi Action Plan are achieved within the set timeline.

Mr. President,

Cooperation and compliance are two sides of the same coin. Since the Mine Ban Convention came into existence, compliance by States Parties has been the foundation of the integrity of this international instrument. As a member state that believes in the cooperative spirit of the Mine Ban Convention, Thailand wishes to see this meeting begin on a constructive note. However, we cannot turn a blind eye to any matter relating to non-compliance and violation. It is therefore with some reluctance, although borne out of necessity, that Thailand has brought to the attention of the States Parties the recent incident of newly planted mines near the Thailand-Cambodia border on October 6. While on routine patrol in Thai territory on a well-traveled path known to both authorities and villagers in the area to be mine-free, two Thai military rangers stepped on

landmines and lost their legs. Our decision to raise this matter is driven by the hope to ultimately prevent the recurrence of such violation, which would severely undermine the integrity of the Mine Ban Convention.

Soon after the incident, Thailand submitted a demarche to Cambodia on October 17 requesting clarification. Rather than replying to us directly, Cambodia chose to circulate its response to all States Parties. We are pleased that Cambodia finally sent us a formal reply late Friday night, but are disappointed that such reply still falls short of addressing our legitimate concerns. Instead, Cambodia's reply can only be interpreted as an attempt to evade the crux of the matter by introducing a number of issues that are extraneous to the Mine Ban Convention. In particular, Cambodia resorted to highlighting the boundary issue, for which there already exists a proper bilateral mechanism. Therefore, as important as the boundary issue is, we feel strongly that the main question facing this meeting is not where the incident occurred, but rather how and why it occurred. Therefore, the meeting should focus on how we can best cooperate to ensure compliance with the noble objectives of the Mine Ban Convention. As far as Thailand is concerned, we have proceeded according to the spirit and letter of the Convention, which is through consultation and cooperation.

While we welcome Cambodia's initiative to conduct its own investigation since the 20th of October, we regret that we were never formally informed about it until Friday night, just ahead of this Meeting. Thailand is certainly open to exploring all options. However, we feel that such investigation must address the crux of the matter, which is the issue of newly planted landmines. Secondly, the investigation must be conducted in a nonpartisan spirit and must also involve third parties, including experts, to which both sides should agree.

In closing, Mr. President, I wish to assure the Meeting that Thailand values our relationship with our neighbour Cambodia. Please rest assured that we seek to work with Cambodia and all States Parties in a spirit of consultation, cooperation and partnership, which lies at the heart of the Land Mine Convention.

Thank you.