

**First International Pledging Conference for the Implementation of the
Anti - Personnel Mine Ban Convention:
A mine Free World by 2025: "The Last Stretch"**

**Intervention by Ambassador Ravinatha P. Aryasinha,
Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka
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**Mr. Chairman,
Director - General Mr. Michale Moller,
Former UN Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan,
and distinguish Panelists
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Sri Lanka is please to attend this very first International Pledging Conference for the Implementation of the Anti - Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I wish to extend our appreciation to Director - General Mr. Michale Moller and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, H.E. Heraldo Munoz for this initiative.

We note that mine clearance, destruction of stockpiles and providing victim assistance remains the main pillars of this Convention, in particular to implement the collective call by State Parties made at the 2014 Review Conference in Maputo, Mozambique. Unfortunately, resource constraints holds back progress in achieving the objectives of the Convention and the Maputo Declaration. The recently held Meeting of State Parties highlighted the challenges and limitations faced by countries, in particular, the developing countries, in fulfilling obligations under Article 4 and 5 of the Convention to destroy stockpiles within 4 years and to clear land- mines within 10 years, of becoming a Party to the Convention.

In this context, the present pledging Conference could provide incentives for those countries that face difficulties, to accelerate their mine clearance programmes, and to motivate others who are not yet a party, to consider joining the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Sri Lanka has made mine clearance a priority, in particular given that it has been critical to expedite the resettlement and livelihood development in the former conflict affected areas in the country. As of date 2000 sq Km of lands have been cleared, with the help of donor countries, international partners and Humanitarian and Demining Unit of Sri Lanka Army. However, 64 sq Km of mine field remains to be cleared.

We take this opportunity to thank the donor countries as well as non - governmental organizations, including the Halo Trust, MAG, Dash, Sharp for the international cooperation extended towards these efforts.

With a vision to make Sri Lanka a mines threat free country by 2020, the Government of Sri Lanka with the technical assistance of the GICHD, has prepared a strategic plan for 2016 - 2020. The project is envisaged to be officially launched on the 'International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action' scheduled for 4th April 2016. I also take this opportunity to request the potential donors to help Sri Lanka in implementation of this programme.

Mr. Chairman,

At the Meeting of the State Parties to the Convention held in Geneva in November 2015, Sri Lanka announced that it is in the process of finalizing internal processes to give effect to the Ottawa Convention. In this regard, I am pleased to inform you that the Cabinet of Ministers, during a meeting held this morning, has approved that Sri Lanka accede to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti - Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

Similarly, the Government has also initiated consultations with stake - holders to become a State Party to the CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

Being mindful of the tragic circumstances faced by many victims of anti - personnel mine related accidents, the Government of Sri Lanka has paid special attention to mine risk education and to assist those victims. Sri Lanka's accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) early this year, is a manifestation of its commitment to provide an enabling environment for those mine victims, as well as for those differently abled people of the country.

While sincerely thanking and appreciating the assistance and support provided to Sri Lanka by the international partners and donors, we request continued support, to successfully resolve the remaining challenges associated with land mines.

We also wish success for this Conference, as well as for the next Meeting of the State Parties to the Convention to be held in Santiago, Chile later this year.

Thank You.

