

ITALY



Ministero degli Affari Esteri

Statement by Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Senator Alfredo Mantica, to the First Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction

(Nairobi, 29 November – 3 December 2004)

Mr Chairman,

on behalf of the Italian Government I would like to express our warmest congratulations for your appointment to chair this Conference which, in addition to reviewing developments over the five years since the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, also looks to the future and is called to indicate our line of action for the coming years. Italy fully agrees with the position expressed by the Presidency of the European Union and refers to its content. I would like to develop a number of additional considerations from the Italian perspective.

Mr Chairman,

in the last few years Italy has made a great effort to contribute at the national and multilateral levels to the implementation and reinforcement of the Ottawa Convention. Italy is one of the countries that has achieved the most significant results in promoting the objectives of the Convention: in the space of just a few years it has brought to a complete halt the domestic production of anti-personnel mines; it has completed, in advance of the established deadlines, the destruction of the biggest amount of stockpiles achieved thus far under the Convention; it has introduced one of the most advanced national legislation; and it has provided considerable international assistance in the field of mine action, both at the bilateral level and within the European Union framework.

All this has been done not because anti-personnel mines have in our view become militarily redundant or obsolete, but because we have accorded priority status to the disarmament and humanitarian aspects of the issue.

The results achieved in the five years since the Ottawa Convention has come into force, in terms of destruction, demining, and international assistance, are of the utmost importance. But we cannot close our eyes to the challenges that still lie before us. Foremost among these is universalisation. The main producers and holders of anti-personnel mines remain outside the Convention: every possible step must be taken to ensure that the Ottawa treaty becomes an international standard.

Asking these countries to sign the Convention is not enough: we need to work strenuously to create the conditions for them to do so and insist in particular on their coming into compliance, gradually if necessary, with its main provisions. We need to work to ensure that they begin to destroy their stockpiles, that they suspend the

production, export and eventually the use of mines, that they engage increasingly in mine action, and that they provide information to the Secretary General of the United Nations, pursuant to Art. VII, on the action they have taken in accordance with the aims of the Convention.

Without prejudice to the priority objective of the universalisation of the Ottawa Convention, we feel that we need to be pragmatic in setting up the mechanisms through which this process can be promoted.

Mr. Chairman,

we need to pay particular attention to the delicate question of the so-called "non-state actors". We hope that they too will comply with the main provision of the Convention: the non-possession and non-use of mines. This does not in any way imply the possibility of their joining the Convention. Nor does it imply any form of recognition, far less the opening of negotiations. It is simply a question of seeking pragmatically to consolidate and extend humanitarian provisions through the use of non-governmental channels.

I am pleased that the concept of universalisation has been fully incorporated in the documents we have adopted. We feel that it is important to comply fully with the spirit and the letter of the Ottawa Convention, an agreement that was the object of long negotiations. However, this should not prevent us in future from clarifying a number of points on a consensus basis.

We feel, for example, that it is possible to establish a numerical ceiling or a criterion to establish a limit to the quantity of mines retained for training purposes. Nor would we have any difficulty, at the national level, in arriving at a more precise definition of what constitutes an anti-personnel mine.

It is up to individual states first and foremost to assume the political, military, and financial responsibilities deriving from the Convention, but we feel that the United Nations too needs to play a central role. We want to see this key role played in full, albeit with due consideration for the space reserved for the other international organisations, especially regional ones, and for non-governmental organisations.

I wish to conclude this statement by thanking the Kenyan Government for its generous hospitality and for the efficient organisation of this Summit. We are pleased that this event is taking place in an African country, as testimony to the suffering that anti-personnel mines have caused in this Continent and the strong commitment by African states in this area.