

**Statement of Sri Lanka**  
**at the First Review Conference on the Ottawa Convention,**  
**29 November – 3 December 2004, Nairobi, Kenya**


Mr. President,

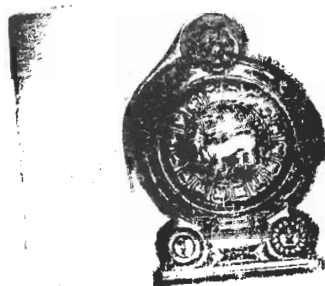
On behalf of the observer delegation of Sri Lanka, let me congratulate you on your election as the President of the First Review Conference of the State Parties to the Ottawa Convention. My delegation assures you and the other members of the bureau, our fullest cooperation in the discharge of your duties to lead this conference to a successful conclusion.

Mr. President,

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, including women and children. In this regard, Sri Lanka recognizes the vital role played by the Ottawa Convention during the last five years to raise global consciousness and achieve international humanitarian and disarmament cooperation on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. During the last five years, the production of anti-personnel mines has decreased significantly while global trade in anti-personnel mines have also effectively ceased. This has resulted in a drastic decrease in the use of anti-personnel mines in many parts of the world.

In Sri Lanka, the Government is in the process of implementing a comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme in order to realize its target of achieving a mine-free country by 2006. The National Steering Committee for Mine Action, which functions under the Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation, a portfolio held by the President of Sri Lanka, is mandated to implement this comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme with the technical support of UNDP and UNICEF. Apart from coordinating and managing all mine action work carried-out in Sri Lanka, the National Steering Committee is also monitoring activities of physical removal of mines and UXOs, mine risk awareness programmes, the provision of care and treatment of mine victims

  
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and gathering of public support for banning the use of mines. At present, there are 8 foreign agencies and 2 local agencies working in landmine clearance in Sri Lanka.

Over the last two years, the national mine action programme has also been successful in building national capacity enabling Sri Lankans to lead this ambitious programme. The Mine Risk Education Programme has also been well established, resulting in a drastic decrease in the mine related accidents from 15 accidents to 5 to 7 accidents per month.

Mr. President,

In the context of the internal armed conflict, the Sri Lankan armed forces were compelled to use anti-personnel landmines for legitimate defensive purposes. Minefields were laid by the security forces in keeping with internationally accepted standards including proper marking and record-keeping procedures. However, since the signing of the ceasefire agreement on 22 February 2002, Sri Lankan armed forces have not laid any landmines. Furthermore, Sri Lanka Army has now become a self-sufficient indigenous de-mining force in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the Army has placed all its humanitarian de-mining resources, including manpower, under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation. The Army has also released over 3000 minefield records to other agencies involved in humanitarian de-mining work in order to ensure speedy and easy recovery of mines, which has significantly facilitated the return of IDPs to their lands. As of October 2004, Sri Lanka Army has cleared 20.9 square kilometers of land, while recovering 96,958 anti-personnel landmines and 6877 UXOs. At present, the total of all mines and UXOs cleared by local and foreign landmine clearance agencies is 372,011.

Mr. President,

On 24<sup>th</sup> September 2004, during the Annual Treaty Event of the United Nations, Sri Lanka acceded to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including its Amended Protocol II on mines, booby traps and other devices. Sri Lanka considers its accession to the CCW, including the Amended Protocol II, as a reiteration of Sri Lanka's unwavering commitment towards the further promotion of international humanitarian law, and its continued constructive engagement with the international community on the

issue of landmines. This significant step has also enhanced deeper understanding of the role of the Sri Lankan security forces and their continued adherence to international humanitarian norms. Furthermore, the Government expects that Sri Lanka's accession to the CCW would enhance the protection being provided to the civilian population as well as to the UN, ICRC, and other humanitarian missions operating in the conflict-affected areas in the country, from the effects of landmines. The Government of Sri Lanka will be submitting a report, on a voluntary basis, under Article 7 of the Ottawa Convention in early 2005 as a part of our sustained effort to share information with the international community on the on-going mine action programme in the country. This is also in consistent with the UNGA resolution on the implementation of the Convention. Sri Lanka has always voted in favour of the above resolution in recognition of the broader humanitarian objective of the Ottawa Convention.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka considers its unwavering commitment towards achieving a mine-free country and its recent agreement to be bound by the CCW Amended Protocol II as two significant positive moves towards its accession to the Ottawa Convention, which is under consideration by the authorities.

Thank you.