

**Statement by South Africa at the 3rd Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Maputo, Mozambique**

Mr President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and Gentleman,

At the onset allow me to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of this Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. With your able leadership and experience, I am certain that this Review Conference will reach a successful outcome. I also wish to thank the Government of Mozambique for the invitation and the warm hospitality offered to us here in this beautiful city of Maputo. South Africa feels a special bond with the people of Mozambique, not only because we share the same borders, but for your country's role during our liberation struggle.

Mr President,

It is five years after the Second Review Conference was held in Cartagena, Colombia. Therefore, this Conference gives us another opportunity to reflect and take stock of the progress that has been made in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. It is particularly befitting that this Review Conference takes place in Maputo, as it is exactly 15 years since the international community first gathered in this City at the Convention's First Meeting of States Parties to begin the historic effort towards realisation of the obligations set by this Convention. Therefore, we wish to thank you for your continued leadership in the work of this Convention, as well as your sterling progress in clearing mined areas. We are sure that many States can learn a lot from your expertise and experience, particularly those who have challenges in meeting their clearance obligations.

Mr President

The Mine Ban Convention has been one of the few success stories in the development of international humanitarian law and humanitarian disarmament. The unique partnership between governments and civil society is one of the strengths that we should preserve. The results of this partnership have been remarkable. When we gathered here in May 1999, there were only 45 States Parties and now 161 States are on board. This constitutes more than three-quarters of the world's nations that have joined the Mine Ban Treaty as of today. The number of casualties and injuries caused by landmines has been significantly reduced. A large portion of contaminated areas has been cleared and more than 46 million stockpiled landmines in 87 countries have been destroyed. As of today almost 30 States have completed their mine clearance obligations.

Mr President

Despite this progress, we need not be too complacent as there are more challenges that still lie ahead of us. A number of areas are still contaminated by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. This contamination results not only in deaths and injuries, but a wide range of social and economic impacts such as blocked access to water sources, blocked arable land resulting in increased food insecurity, reduced household earnings, delayed repair of damaged infrastructure, isolation of communities, increased healthcare costs for individuals and delayed or dangerous return for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees after conflict. Perhaps the greatest shortcoming has been the delay by a number of mine-affected States Parties to draw up clear plans to survey and map the extent of their anti-personnel mine contamination. Consequently, a number of States Parties could not meet their 10 year clearance deadlines and had to request for extensions. The slow pace of clearance hinders reconstruction and development efforts in communities that desperately require land for their developmental needs and puts the lives of innocent civilians at risk.

Mr President,

South Africa has consistently emphasised that mine victims still face a number of challenges which include among others; reintegration, inadequate medical emergency and on-going medical care services, lack of accessibility to some victims especially those in remote areas, lack of physical and psychosocial support, discrimination in the job market and others. It is particularly the former aspect, namely the reintegration of landmine survivors into society and giving them the opportunity of leading normal lives that appears to have been lagging behind. I wish to underscore that the care for victims should be a long-term undertaking by States.

Mr President

South Africa is concerned about the lack of further progress towards the Universalisation of the Convention. We are satisfied that a growing number of States, which are not parties to the Convention are generally adhering to the norms established by the Convention. However, we remain particularly concerned about a number of States that continue to hold significant stockpiles of anti-personnel mines and have yet to join the Convention. Universalisation should therefore remain one of our priorities. We are also concerned about the continued use of these inhumane weapons more than a decade since this Convention was adopted. We call upon States to condemn any use of landmines, as this is a clear violation of international law and a setback to the work that has been done towards the achievement of a mine free world.

On the issue of international co-operation and assistance, we view the issue of International Cooperation and Assistance as the cornerstone of the Convention, as we believe that it is the key for full implementation. A number of States Parties especially the highly affected, face challenges regarding the implementation of these key provisions of the Convention. South Africa wishes to emphasise that the implementation

of the Convention cannot be achieved without those States Parties in a position to do so also fully meeting their assistance obligations. The fact remains that the world's most mine-affected countries are also the world's poorest.

Mr President,

We appreciate the extensive consultations that you have conducted on the draft outcome documents such as Implementation Machinery, the Maputo Action Plan and the Political Declaration. South Africa was honoured to be one of the 'Friends of the President' that were responsible for the drafting of these documents and we commend you for your diligence, hard work, transparency and openness. The forward-looking priorities set by the Maputo Action Plan for the next five years will complement existing work being done on the implementation of the Convention in our achievement of a mine-free world.

Mr President,

In conclusion, I wish to quote from a speech by the former late President Nelson Mandela when he said during the 90th birthday celebration of one of our liberation heroes, Mr Walter Sisulu, "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead." It is due to this reason that South Africa will continue to play its part in creating a better world for all, that is free of mine victims and anti-personnel mines.

I thank you.