

EU Council

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**Third Continental Conference of African Experts on Anti-Personnel Landmines
Presentation by Dr. Andreas Strub¹**

Pretoria, 9 September 2009

- Let me, first of all, express my gratitude to our South African colleagues for hosting this very topical seminar for all countries on the African continent. I address you also on behalf of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, Mr. Javier Solana, and as Coordinator of the Office of the Personal Representative on non-proliferation, dealing with the whole range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues. I am very happy that the EU Joint Action which we have proposed at the time is now allowing us to have this event in Africa, with all of you present.
- As you have heard from our current Swedish EU Presidency, the European Union is **deeply concerned** about the tremendous humanitarian and development challenges still posed by anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance. These devices continue to kill people and constitute an obstacle to the return of refugees and other displaced persons, humanitarian aid operations, reconstruction and economic development, as well as the restoration of normal social conditions, and have serious and lasting social and economic effects on the populations of mine-affected countries.
- Already in **November 1997** the Council adopted a Joint Action (A Joint Action is an instrument of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which allows the Union to take action and allocate financial resources to a specific objective), which stated **the commitment of the European Union to the goal of total elimination of anti-personnel landmines worldwide**, as well as to contributing to solving the problems already caused by these weapons; it also aimed at continuing the political efforts made by the Union in pursuit of a common

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moratoria on transfers and production of anti-personnel mines, and towards a multi-faceted contribution by the Union to mine clearance and related activities.

- Indeed, the EU has at its disposal a full range of instruments to give an appropriate answer to such concerns and to the objectives identified in 1997. Certainly the European Union is aware of the potential of mine action as a peace and confidence-building measure in post-conflict situations among parties concerned.
- What the EU does is not only to provide punctual assistance to those suffering from landmines or to prevent harm, but we also do this with a clear political vision. Work on landmines is definitely part of our strategic approach to security. As you know the EU has been developing a **Common Foreign and Security Policy** and is committed to play a role on the international scene in support of international peace, stability and security. The EU is active in the field of civil and military crisis management (ESDP), including on this continent. But we are also very active in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The EU approach to security has always been based on the principles of **effective multilateralism, prevention and international cooperation**. These principles are enshrined in our Security Strategy adopted in December 2003.
- In the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, effective multilateralism consists in strengthening the treaty based system: this means strengthening by expansion of membership and ensuring full national compliance. We are also committed to strengthening the UN system, and within the UN, the UN Security Council. Originally we concentrated in the WMD area, our political support to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the IAEA, UNSCR 1540, the CTBTO or the BTWC materialised in a series of Joint Actions. These Joint Actions had

three major objectives, fully in line with the EU Security Strategy: universality, full national implementation and compliance and international cooperation.

- Universality is indeed a major requirement for treaties and conventions banning an entire category of weapons or regulating a certain type of activity. Universality and national compliance are important in order for a treaty to be fully credible and to fully achieve its objective. Parties will enjoy the benefit of the Treaty and feel protected if all other countries are also bound by the same rules and are expected to comply with them.
- We are now also fully applying this scheme, which was successful in the field of WMD, in the conventional weapons area. We promote international instruments at our disposal and we support their full national implementation by providing technical assistance in a tailor-made manner through international cooperation.
- To give you one example beyond landmines: We are promoting the universalisation of the CCW (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons) and all its protocols (**including protocol II on the prohibitions or restrictions on the use of mines, booby-traps and other devices**) for which seminars organised by the UN-ODA were arranged in different regions of the world. We are also very active in the promotion of the negotiation of an **Arms Trade Treaty** (ATT). To that end we are reaching out to African sub-regions to learn from your specific experience with arms trade; we consider this as an important input for the elaboration of such a treaty.
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) entered into force on 1 March 1999. The increasing number of States Parties to this Convention makes it a comprehensive and dynamic international instrument to deal with all aspects related to anti-personnel landmines, including their use, production and trade, victim assistance, mine clearance and stockpile destruction.

- You know that the United Nations General Assembly has regularly adopted Resolutions on the implementation of this Convention, inviting all States that have not signed it to accede and ratify; the GA has also urged all of us **to promote adherence to the Convention through bilateral, sub-regional, regional and multilateral contacts, outreach, seminars and other means.**

The EU is taking this very seriously, as you can see today.

- With this in mind, as well as with the fact that the second Review Conference of the Convention will take place at the end of 2009, the Council of the European Union has adopted a specific Joint Action to support the universalisation and the full national implementation of the Ottawa Convention, as well as to prepare subscribing States for the Review Conference in 2009. The Geneva Centre for International Humanitarian Demining (GCIHD) was identified as the implementing agency to organise a series of regional seminars and to provide concrete expertise through targeted assistance visits. This specific effort under the Common Foreign and Security Policy complements and provide a political reference to the efforts done through EC instruments in this area.
- You have heard about the main features of the EU Joint Action, also in terms of geographical an regional coverage, from the Swedish EU Presidency.
- By the end of the Joint Action we hope to achieve an increased membership of the Convention , renewed global interest in the importance of the objectives and the obligations resulting from the ratification of the Convention, as well as a better understanding of the needs of future States Parties concerning anti-personnel landmines programmes. The Joint Action also allows to provide specific assistance to States Party in implementing the provisions of the Convention, in particular those states, which are in the process of fulfilling their obligations concerning mine clearance, victim assistance or stockpile destruction. Lessons will be drawn to define future assistance programmes.

- Over the last ten years, the European Union and its Member States have consistently provided major political, financial and scientific support to mine action worldwide, totalling around EUR 1.5 billion and constituting almost a half of the world's financial assistance to mine action in this period. The European Union has been integrating mine action into long-term socioeconomic development programmes with a view to improving its response to national priorities and enhancing local ownership.
- The EU's overall goal is a world free of anti-personnel mines without any new anti-personnel mine victims and where better care is provided for the victims of these weapons. This is an ambitious target, but it can be achieved if all states demonstrate the necessary determination and unite their efforts towards this end.
- Therefore I use this opportunity to call upon countries which have not yet acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention), which embodies both humanitarian and disarmament objectives, to do so as soon as possible, and join in the efforts to permanently eliminate anti-personnel landmines as well as to all other relevant instruments.
- This Convention and today's meeting is a symbol for the level of cooperation the EU has reached with countries on this continent and shows that our cooperation with you and the African Union is of great practical and political importance to us.
- Thank you for your attention.