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**Address by Mr Andries Nel, MP, Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, on behalf of the government of the Republic of South Africa, at the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World (Second Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction), Cartagena**

4 December 2009

Madam President  
Excellencies  
Ladies and gentlemen

I wish to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of this Second Review Conference of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. With your wide experience and skilful leadership, I am convinced that this review conference will reach a successful outcome. It was a pleasure for the government and people of South Africa to welcome their Majesties King Harald V and Queen Sonja of the Kingdom of Norway to the shores of South Africa recently, which further emphasised the excellent partnership and strong bonds of friendship between our two countries.

I also wish to thank our gracious hosts, the government of Colombia, for the warm hospitality offered to us here in this beautiful city of Cartagena. South Africa feels a special bond with the people of Colombia and with Cartagena in particular, because it was here fourteen years ago that we announced that we would be honoured to take over the custodianship of the Non-Aligned Movement. When we did so in 1998, we constantly measured our chairpersonship of the movement against the high standards set by Colombia.

Madam President, it is particularly fitting that the high level segment of this review conference commenced yesterday; the day on which we had the occasion to observe the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Five years after the first review conference was held in Nairobi, we have been able to reflect on the progress we have made in the implementation of the treaty, as well as the huge challenges that still face us.

The late Mr Alfred Nzo, former South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, reminded us at the signing ceremony of the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997 that: "Treaties and conventions are only as good as the implementation by state parties and we must be vigilant to ensure that our ban Convention will live up to its objectives".

The stark reality is that anti-personnel mines, long a relic of the Second World War and countless wars in the developing world, still kill, maim and threaten innocent civilians. It is a particular irony that the ensuing destabilising influence of outside forces, either directly or through proxy wars, should still shackle and prevent so many of the poor in the world in their quest to lead normal lives.

This is probably the greatest humanitarian challenge that remains before us. Our government is largely satisfied that we are truly on course to achieving the disarmament objectives set by the convention. Together we have, as states parties, managed to destroy millions of stockpiled anti-personnel mines. We have succeeded in stigmatising anti-personnel mines as weapons of war and its use even amongst armed non-state actors has become

limited.

As far as clearance efforts are concerned, perhaps the greatest shortcoming was 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. We had not expected so many states parties to indicate that they had only commenced with their planning to clear mined areas mid-way into their ten year deadlines. This was especially of concern as the international emphasis in donor funding had by then shifted to the other areas such as in eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and to combating terrorism. The recent global financial crisis has further compounded the availability of funds for mine action.

Madam President, South Africa has consistently emphasised the challenges of victim assistance and socio-economic reintegration as being the greatest posed in our implementation of the mine ban treaty. It is particularly the latter aspect, namely the reintegration of landmine survivors into society and giving them the opportunity of leading normal, economically active lives that appears to have been neglected. We have again heard this week from the victims themselves asking, are they the ones who are disabled or are we as the rest of society the ones who are the disabled, unable to create the necessary conditions for them to lead the normal lives that they are entitled to leading.

I wish to highlight, as South Africa and others have done before, that caring for victims should not be limited to the health aspects of post-traumatic care, but should be a commitment that states parties are required to undertake to those victims for the remainder of their lives. On the issue of international co-operation and assistance, 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. It will be impossible for them to meet their obligations without receiving the necessary international co-operation and assistance, as they are entitled to under the provisions of the Convention.

Madam President, We appreciate the extensive consultations that you have conducted on the draft Cartagena plan of action. Its forward looking priorities for the next five year benchmark will complement existing work being done on the implementation of the convention in our achievement of a mine-free world. For its part, South Africa hosted, with the assistance of the European commission, the third African Union Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines in Pretoria in September 2009. The updated African Common Position on landmines is based on the previous position and sets out a framework for the future implementation of the Convention on the continent.

It is our intention to put the conference outcome document, an updated African Common Position on landmines, to the next African Union Executive Council of Foreign Ministers for formal endorsement. This, we believe, will complement existing global and continental guidelines for the implementation of the aims and objectives of the mine ban treaty on our continent.

We have previously stated that we seek lasting peace and security in Africa, through initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). One of the stated goals of NEPAD is the creation of long-term conditions for development and security on our continent, which include building capacity in the areas of post-conflict reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Madam President, it would be remiss of me not to thank the huge contribution made by civil society to the implementation of the convention globally. This contribution not only emphasises the government and civil society partnership that is a distinguishing characteristic of the mine ban treaty, but it is one that has made a

concrete contribution in our collective resolve to rid the world of anti-personnel mines. Just as we as the South African government believe in achieving national goals together, we also believe that we can do more by working together as governments and civil society at the global level.

Madam President, we are pleased with the adoption of the convention on cluster munitions last year. The international community now has two instruments of international humanitarian law that seek to eliminate the unnecessary suffering caused by these inhumane weapons to innocent civilian populations, long after the cessation of active hostilities. The complementary nature of the two conventions offers us a real opportunity for the creation of synergies in our implementation efforts, both on anti-personnel mines and on cluster munitions. This is particularly so in the area of victim assistance, where we now have added groundbreaking guidelines.

In conclusion, Madam President, I wish to quote from a statement by former President Mandela when he said in his 1998 state of the nation address to a joint sitting of the South African Parliament: "We shall continue to make our humble contribution to the search for peace and the humane conduct of international relations. Our contribution on these issues, including the campaign for a ban on anti-personnel land mines and nuclear disarmament, derives from our own experience about what humanity should not do to itself."

I thank you.

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