

Statement By Mr. Rakesh Sood, Ambassador, Head of the Indian Delegation, At Fifth Annual Conference of the States Parties to Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects, Geneva, November 26, 2003

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the responsibility to guide the work of this Conference. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau of the Conference. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in your endeavours to make this Conference a success.

Mr. President, India supports the vision of a world free of the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war to enable individuals and communities to live in a safe environment conducive to development. We remain fully committed to the ultimate objective of a non-discriminatory universal and global ban on anti-personnel mines in a manner that addresses the legitimate defence requirements of the States. India believes that the process of complete elimination of Anti-Personnel Landmines will be facilitated by the availability of appropriate militarily effective, non-lethal and cost effective alternative technologies. This will enable the legitimate defensive role of anti-personnel landmines for operational requirements, to be addressed, thereby furthering our objective.

India remains committed to full and effective implementation of the Amended Protocol II and has taken all the required measures to ensure the compliance with its provisions. India has implemented the stipulated technical modifications in the design of the anti-personnel landmines to make them detectable. The production of non-detectable mines has been discontinued since January 1997. As we have reported, India has completed design and development of detectable anti-personnel mines, affixed with 8 grams of iron and a programme has been evolved to ensure that implementation is completed well before the stipulated period, as per provisions laid down in Amended Protocol II. Moreover, as stated earlier, India observes a formal moratorium of unlimited duration prohibiting all exports of landmines. In India, the production and use of landmines is restricted to the agencies of the federal Government and there is no manufacture or trade in landmines in the private sector.

Further, India has taken several steps in order to sensitize the armed forces and to increase public awareness of issues related to anti-personnel landmines, including dissemination of a booklet on India's position on landmines and her obligations under Amended Protocol II to all armed forces headquarters, formations and units, organization on a frequent basis of presentations and seminars, inclusion of this subject in the syllabi of relevant army courses and regular interaction among agencies of the Government of India for exchange of views and information on the implementation of the provisions of Amended Protocol II. Various non-governmental organizations, strategic think tanks, independent policy and research institutions as well as the electronic and print media have supplemented the efforts of the Government in increasing public awareness.

Mr. President, in India only the armed forces are permitted to use landmines. They have well-

established Standard of Operation Procedures whereby minefields are laid along border areas as a part of military operations and are explicitly marked and fenced to prevent casualties to innocent civilians or grazing cattle. Mines had to be laid along our western border in 2002 and by last month, over 90 percent of mines laid had been recovered. The target of 100 percent recovery of all mines that have been laid will be achieved shortly.

As a result of the Government of India's policy on landmines, we are in a position to state that there is no interior part of India that could be regarded as mine afflicted. India has never resorted to the use of mines for maintenance of law and order or in internal security situations. Despite the grave provocations by the use of improvised explosive devices by terrorists groups, Indian armed forces have exercised restraint and refrained from using landmines except as a part of military operations. The Corps of Engineers of the Indian Army continue to aid civil authorities in defusing and clearing improvised explosive devices used indiscriminately by terrorists in some parts of the country. During the past decades, the expertise of the Indian Army has, in fact, been extensively applied in UN-sponsored mine clearance programmes in which India had participated – such as the affected areas of Congo, Angola, Cambodia, Somalia, Mozambique, Bosnia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. India strongly supports technical cooperation, including unrestricted transfer of mine-clearance technology, equipment and training and remains ready to contribute to such measures.

Mr. President, India remains committed to provide mine-related assistance and is willing to contribute technical assistance and expertise to mine clearance and rehabilitation programmes. India has developed and distributed in mine affected countries of Africa and South Asia including Afghanistan, a widely acclaimed artificial limb, popularly known as Jaipur foot, which is simple and efficient. India has been indigenously developing and improving the technology, components and material use for the construction of the-state-of-the-art prosthetics for rehabilitation of mine victims.

India welcomes the countries that have joined the Amended Protocol II since we met last, and would urge others who have not done so to ratify all the Protocols under CCW as soon as possible. We have submitted our National Annual Report in keeping with our obligations under Amended Protocol II and welcome the submission of National Annual Reports by other countries.

Mr. President, my delegation looks forward to hearing the views of new adherents to the Amended Protocol II and learning, through today's deliberations, of the successful measures taken by other Member States towards implementation of the Protocol that we have committed ourselves to. This would be an important input for the Meeting of the States Parties to the CCW that is to commence tomorrow.

Thank you