

Mr. President,

At the outset let me congratulate you on the personal commitment and determination with which you are presiding over the CD with a view to overcoming the present situation which you vividly described as a 'desolante lethargie'. We join your tribute to the previous Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, all members of G-21, who in coordinating their efforts for the holding of the informal plenaries underlined the real concerns of developing countries on what is widely regarded as a crisis of multilateralism.

Our approach to disarmament is founded in our belief in multilateralism, which most particularly serves the interest of small states. It is in this context that we would wish to update the CD, on recent developments in my country.

I take the floor today to inform the members of the CD that Sri Lanka will accede 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 (Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons). While acceding to this Convention, Sri Lanka will also become a Party to the Amended Protocol II on Mines, Booby traps and other devices, Protocol III on Incendiary Weapons and Protocol IV on Blinding Laser Weapons. The formal instrument for accession will be deposited at the Treaty Event 2004 to be held in New York during the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka will also be submitting a report on a voluntary basis, under Article VII of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention), and in accordance with UNGA Resolution 58/53.

These measures are a reiteration of Sri Lanka's unwavering commitment towards the further promotion of humanitarian law and its continued constructive engagement with the international community on the issue of landmines. Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE in February, 2002 the Government of Sri Lanka has embarked on a comprehensive humanitarian mine action programme with the broad objective of making Sri Lanka a mine free country by the year 2006. The Sri Lanka Army was the first to engage and the major force in the country's de-mining activities. As a result of on-going mine action programmes the number of mine related incidents have dropped by half and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons have been resettled in their homes. These measures extend protection to both the civilian population as well as the UN and other humanitarian missions operating in the conflict affected areas.

We also welcome the efforts made by Geneva Call which have been meeting with non-state parties concerned with a view to their signature of the Deed of Commitment to enable Sri Lanka's accession to the Ottawa Convention.