

**SECOND REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE CONVENTION ON
THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING,
PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES
AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

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REMARKS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to participate as a panelist and as the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations in this event commemorating the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention. This date is a significant opportunity to reaffirm the importance of this instrument and reflect on the achievements and challenges related to its universalization and implementation.

As host country of the Second Review Conference of the Convention, we appreciate the opportunity to promote this event, which must strengthen actions towards a world free from antipersonnel mines.

The Ottawa Convention has special priority and relevance for Colombia. Our

country has been one of the most affected by the phenomenon of anti-personnel mines, due to their continued use by illegal armed groups such as FARC and ELN. The terrorist group FARC is responsible for 90% of mines emplaced in Colombia.

This perverse practice by terrorist groups in Colombia has hindered opportunities for human, social and economic sustainable development in many communities, especially in rural populations. Between 1990 and 2008, 7,451 Colombians were victims of these devices. 77% of victims survived the accident. 66% of those affected are members of the security forces. 34% have been civilians, including women and children. Although last year new cases decreased by 21% with regard to 2007, the situation remains a serious concern.

For these reasons, the Colombian State is acting with strong commitment and determination in the fight against this scourge.

At the international level, our country has been involved in the process of the Ottawa Convention from its early stages. Colombia participated in the group of States that were behind the negotiation process and the subsequent adoption of this treaty in the Oslo Diplomatic Conference of 1997. This process was also possible as a result of the advocacy and support from international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Domestically, we have strengthened legislation and policies related to this issue. Colombian Public Forces definitely suspended the use of these devices and completed the destruction of stockpiles in October 2004, before the 5-year

term established in the Convention.

We have worked hard to curb land mine contamination. The coordination of a comprehensive action against antipersonnel mines has been enhanced. We have a presidential program at the highest level, responsible for coordinating and monitoring the activities of the various entities involved in this matter.

Several specialized platoons for humanitarian demining have been established, which work in accordance with national and international standards for clearing land mine contaminated areas. A comprehensive prevention strategy is in place, in order to reach the most affected communities through the dissemination of protection messages and education on the risk posed by mines.

Assistance and the physical and psychological rehabilitation, as well as socioeconomic integration of victims and their families, are key components of the policies being implemented.

All actions are framed by the Government's commitment to restore safety and security for the affected communities, protect the lives and welfare of Colombians, and fulfill international obligations.

Colombia offered to host the Second Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, and was chosen by State Parties to do so, as further recognition of our strong commitment to the total elimination of these devices around the world.

Tonight, I would like to highlight some of Colombia's expectations as well as the opportunities presented by the II Review Conference to be held in Cartagena de Indias between November 30th and December 4th 2009.

First, the Conference must renew and deepen the commitment of States, international organizations and civil society, with the eradication of this scourge. It will be a forum to examine the implementation of the Convention, assess progress made by States, and reaffirm the political and legal commitments made 10 years ago and fully comply and respect them.

In this regard, the II Conference should stress that the problem of antipersonnel mines continues to be a priority around the world, and must send a clear message about the relevance of the Convention, which should not be affected by other processes and conventions that also address issues of humanitarian impact.

Second, the Conference should allow an open and transparent assessment of the achievements made in the last decade, and define guidelines for action to address challenges and correct weaknesses and failures.

Five years ago, in Nairobi, States Parties formulated the 2004-2009 Action Plan on various topics of the Convention. Cartagena provides a meaningful opportunity to further identify existing challenges and, on this basis, validate and rethink the criteria to guide mine action efforts. In this manner, it will be possible to define an action plan that responds to present realities, including measures to overcome obstacles in the destruction of stockpiles and clearing minefields.

Another challenge to be addressed during the discussions in Cartagena is the strengthening of international cooperation in this area. This issue is even more relevant in the context of the current economic and financial crisis. We have to commit the international community, including the United Nations and other relevant actors, to ensure the technical and financial assistance required for the effective implementation of the Convention. In particular, cooperation to ensure support for mine action programs overcoming the impact on affected communities and areas, as well as guarantee support to demining programs and assistance to victims.

Furthermore, the Conference offers an opportunity to discuss how to strengthen assistance, rehabilitation and the socioeconomic integration of victims and their families. Likewise, how to enhance the participation and contribution of civil society.

The Conference should define more effective strategies to move towards the universalization of the Convention, another of the priority challenges. Moreover, Cartagena is an opportunity to call upon those States that are not part of the Convention to stop the production, use and transfer of these weapons, and to commit to the destruction of their stockpiles. Moreover, we should consider the problem of the use of these devices by illegal armed groups and terrorist organizations as part of their tactics of destruction. The humanitarian impact of these weapons on the civilian population is enough reason for States Parties to firmly call for their total elimination.

The participation of NGOs and international entities working in this field is of great importance for the success of the Second Conference. The support by these actors and the contribution of their specific strengths are important to consolidate progress at the national and international levels. In this regard, I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines for convening today's meeting and providing us with an opportunity to promote the Second Review Conference.

In this context, allow me to encourage you watch tonight's disarmament film and discuss it with each other.

To conclude, I would like to invite you to Cartagena and also to participate in all the processes related to the Second Review Conference. Your commitment will be crucial for us to work productively throughout this year, in order for this important event to result in concrete and effective actions that make the universality and full implementation of the Ottawa Convention a reality.

Thank you very much.