



FRENCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

**Address by H.E. Alain Girma,
Ambassador, Special Assistant to the Head of the Strategic, Security and Disarmament
Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Secretary-General of the
National Commission for the Elimination of Anti-Personnel Mines**

Second Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention Banning Anti-Personnel Mines

**High Level Segment
(Cartagena, 3-4 December 2009)**

Madame President,

For the second time, all stakeholders in the 1997 Ottawa Convention are gathered in Cartagena de Indias to assess the fight against anti-personnel mines and lay the ground for the future. I would like on this occasion to warmly thank Colombia for hosting the Conference in this superb city steeped in history. And I would also like to equally commend Norway for its remarkable preparatory work and conduct of proceedings.

In a little more than ten years, the Ottawa Convention has scored admirable successes and raised immense hopes. It has become the established universal standard of reference in the fight against anti-personnel mines, including for States who have not acceded to the Convention. It is most satisfactory to be able to observe that both international humanitarian law and disarmament can translate into very concrete progress for populations affected or threatened by this scourge, through genuine determination on the part of States and unflinching support from civil society.

Madame President,

There is of course still a huge amount of work to do and momentum must be maintained. The Ottawa Convention is seeking a new lease of life, while the fledgling Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions is starting to emerge. Its universalization appears to be slowing down. Yet action against mines is still a major challenge for our countries, particularly in order to reduce the number of victims as rapidly as possible.

We should therefore continue to keep up our efforts to convince those States who have not yet joined the Convention. I would also like to salute those of them who have chosen to take an interest and participate in our work, without going as far as to accede. I wish to salute the presence of the United States in this body for the first time.

France was one of the first States to ratify the Ottawa Convention. It applied its provisions in an exemplary manner. It mobilized its diplomacy to work towards universalization, and will continue to do so by proposing to its partners joint regular action to that end in the coming years, possibly in the form of open letters. We will recall that, although it has not yet been ratified, the Ottawa Convention has become a universal standard that cannot be overlooked.

Madame President,

We should also continue to take action to prevent and alleviate tragedies, as so much remains to be done. France fully subscribes to the highly operational Action Plan drafted for the Conference and which we are about to sign. France invites all actors in the fight against anti-personnel mines to abide by these commitments.

France has supported many projects for the depollution of contaminated areas, providing assistance to victims and training, often conducted by NGOs like Handicap International to whom I wish to pay tribute. Our military forces also contribute directly to the depollution of minefields in a number of external theatres. And France continues to allocate important resources to the depollution of its territory which was the theatre of two world wars.

In future, France is going to establish a comprehensive approach common to anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war in order to seek all possible synergies by fully integrating it into post-crisis and development assistance strategies.

Madame President,

The presence here of many civil society representatives once again demonstrates the essential complementarity of States and Non-Governmental Organizations which was so finely illustrated during the Oslo Convention negotiations. We can, and must, work together, and more so each day.

France, who is proud to have an NGO like Handicap International, will continue to fully involve representatives of civil society and parliamentarians in the monitoring of the implementation of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions, in a fully transparent manner.

Madame President,

To conclude, I would like to quote from an immense writer, namely Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who once said that 'Humanity, like armies in the field, advances at the speed of the slowest', and to reply very respectfully to him that emulation can fortunately help quicken the pace. The fight against mines is, I believe, exemplary evidence of this.

Thank you.