

Madam President, Excellencies, dear delegates,

At the outset of my statement let me express the great appreciation of the Kingdom of The Netherlands to the President, the Vice president, the government and the people of Colombia for their warm hospitality and for all their efforts to make this week a succes. May I also express our gratitude to you, madam President for the excellent and efficient way in which you have guided our work.

Let me state that we fully align ourselves with the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the EU.

Madam President

13 years ago I also attended a meeting as a representative of my country. The meeting took place in a modest conference room in Ottawa. I think there were about 40 states present, as well as representatives of the ICBL and the ICRC. We were hopelessly divided. Many states advocated that we should negotiate a ban in the normal disarmament framework of the Conference of Disarmament where all the major producers and possessors of AP mines were present. The core group of about 10 states of which the Netherlands was part, was arguing for a more ambitious approach fearing that the CD road would be a dead end. At the end of that meeting we were addressed by Lloyd Axworthy, the then Foreign Minister of Canada. Lloyd Axworthy did not dwell long on the differences of view but rather stressed the importance of achieving a ban and he invited us all to return to Ottawa in one year to sign a Convention containing such a complete ban. With our present vocabulary we would probably say he told us yes we can. He left us with emotions ranging from astonishment to utter disbelief. Even among core group members not all believed that such a rapid conclusion would be feasible. But yes we could. One year later over a 100 states came to Ottawa to sign the Convention, yes we could.

We have come a long way since. This week we meet in a very large conference centre for the second review of the Convention. It needs to be ~~very large in order to~~ <sup>so as to</sup> be able to house the delegations of all 156 State Parties, the large number of representatives of civil society, international organizations, UN agencies and observer states, which I hope will be full states parties next time.

We have come a long way also because since Ottawa the world of multilateral disarmament has changed. The role of civil society is now generally accepted and has increased tremendously. The classical consensus type of disarmament negotiations is no longer the only model. Humanitarian considerations play an important role. We have witnessed the successful conclusion of the Cluster munitions convention.

We have come a long way: the role of AP mines has been marginalized, the production, possession, transfer and certainly use has been discredited. States that have not ratified the convention nevertheless abide with all or some of its obligations. But most importantly we have come a long way because we were able to turn the tide. Both the number of victims and the number of landmines laid and stored are decreasing.

For all these reasons I still feel privileged that I have participated in the Ottawa process.

Madam President

We should not forget however; the more beautiful a house is, the more maintenance it requires. The number of victims and mines laid is decreasing, but the job is far from done. Especially in difficult economic times it is a challenge to maintain the level of funding, but we have to do so. In that respect I am happy that in the next two years the Netherlands will continue to contribute on a bilateral basis 15 million Euro 22,5 million USD annually to mine action. In the past five years we already contributed 85 million Euro or 127.5 million USD. Only yesterday evening I received confirmation that my government is offering an additional contribution of 4.5 million Euro around 6.8 million USD to UNMAS.

An indispensable element for the maintenance of our convention and its objectives is the ISU. Many delegations during this week have expressed their great appreciation for the work of the ISU. Let me reiterate here, the great importance The Netherlands attaches to the ISU, an attachment illustrated by the announced earlier contribution of 100.000 Euro 150.000 usd for 2010. I hope other states will do the same.

Madam President,

No housekeeper or contractor, however skilled and dedicated he or she may be, can maintain the building if its owners are not fully committed to upholding its quality. The owners are we, the state parties. If we fail to meet our obligations, whether on Cooperation and assistance, Mine clearance or Destruction of stocks the quality of the house of our Convention undoubtedly will degrade. I hope that this Conference, the Action Plan, the Cartagena declaration have renewed and reinforced our commitment. In the unlikely circumstance that we forget, I am sure that Civil Society will be there to remind us.

At the time, Critics of the Ottawa process and of the convention itself sometimes told us that the Convention would be just "a feel good document" and would not make any real difference on the ground. We have proven them wrong, let us continue to do so. By remaining all fully committed to the goal set out in the Cartagena declaration "a world free of landmines within our lifetime" we can achieve that objective.

You can count on the commitment and the support of The Netherlands in that common effort.

Thank you