

Statement by Honorable Mr. Rakam Chemjong, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction of Nepal at the Second Review Conference of the State Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.

Madam President

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by congratulating you Madam President on your election to the Presidency of this Conference. I pay tribute to you on your skillful steering of this conference. I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Colombia for the warmth and hospitality extended to us and for the excellent organization of the conference.

I have brought warm greetings and best wishes from the Right Honorable Prime Minister of Nepal, who chaired the meeting of his cabinet today at the base camp of the Mount Everest, at an altitude of 17,500 feet, to draw world community's attention on the devastating impact of the climate change on the life and livelihood of our people.

Madam President

Though Nepal is not a State party to the Ottawa Convention, our compliance and mine action programs undertaken thus far illustrate our commitment to the humanitarian cause the Convention advocates. This is because we support the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

I take this opportunity to present a brief account of Mine Action activities in Nepal.

With the end of the decade-long armed conflict, Nepal is in the process of framing a new democratic constitution to consolidate multiparty democracy, institutionalize respect for human rights and initiate the restructuring of the State in line with federalism. The Constituent Assembly, which is an example of inclusion and diversity, is engaged in framing of the Constitution. There are numerous tasks ahead of us as we have been navigating the process of transition.

At the midst of pressing priorities, true to our humanitarian commitments, mine action also constitutes as one of the priority areas in our peace building process. The Comprehensive Peace Accord, signed between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) spells out clear commitment to the mine action and commensurate assistance to the victims. We have been continuously engaged in implementing those commitments.

We have achieved impressive progress in mine clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance in partnership with a vibrant mine action community. So far, a third of the minefields in Nepal have been cleared by the Nepal Army with the support of the UN Mine Action Team and all remaining minefields are scheduled to be cleared by the end of 2011. Additionally over 46,000 dangerous items held within the Maoist Army Cantonment sites have been destroyed with the support of the UN.

Nepal does not produce or enable the transfer of landmines and has not planted landmines since the end of the insurgency in 2006.

A comprehensive Mine Risk Education campaign has been launched in partnership with multiple actors, including the UNICEF, national and international civil society organizations. Mine risk education now covers most of the districts in Nepal.

The government is implementing victim assistance programs and the contribution of nongovernmental organizations towards this end is also significant.

As the national mine action authority, the Mine Action Steering Committee, chaired by myself in my capacity as the Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, and the Mine Action Technical Committee under the Steering Committee are taking the lead in mine action activities to build on the ongoing mine action work. To this end, a taskforce formed by the Steering Committee has submitted a National Mine Action Plan for Nepal through 2011. This Plan, along with the newly established Mine Action Unit in the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, will reinforce the ownership and coordination of mine action activities in Nepal. The current and continued support of the international community to Nepal in this endeavor is highly valued.

Madam President,

As I already mentioned, we are in transition and engaged in framing a new constitution within six months from now. The new constitution will provide us a ground for sustainable peace in the country, and I anticipate and hope that this environment will provide background to further our contribution towards a mine free world.

Nepal has always supported the humanitarian spirit and objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and is acting in line with many of its objectives. We will continue our efforts to participate and engage with the international community to demonstrate Nepal's support to a Mine-Free World.

I thank you Madam President.