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Press Release

Colombia to host global conference on landmine survivors and disability rights

Geneva and New York 24 September 2013 – Colombia, one of the most mine-affected countries in the world, will host a two-day global conference on how to effectively meet the needs of landmine survivors in broader contexts. Entitled, ***Bridges between Worlds***, the conference seeks to deepen understandings and find synergies among the human rights, disability, international humanitarian law and victim assistance “worlds”.

The announcement of the event, sponsored by the European Union and Colombia that will take place on 3-4 April 2014 in Medellín, was made by Daniel Avila Camacho, Director of Colombia’s Presidential Program for the Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines (PAICMA), during the United Nations’ High Level Meeting on Disability and Development in New York.

Hundreds of participants from all over the world, including representatives from several other countries affected by landmines and other explosive remnants of war, national and international human rights, disability and international humanitarian law experts, landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities are expected for ***Bridges between Worlds*** in 2014. In addition, Colombia has extended an invitation to participate to relevant representatives of the academic world, the private sector and local and regional authorities.

“The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention commits us to assist landmine victims but landmine victim assistance is not a world unto itself. We must do what we can to link these efforts to broader international activities,” said PAICMA Director, Daniel Avila Camacho. “Therefore, Colombia extends an invitation to attend ***Bridges between Worlds*** to the world’s leading disabled persons’ organizations, landmine survivor networks, international coalitions of civil society organizations that concern themselves with disability and anti-personnel mines and other international experts to reinforce bridges like those between the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, all within a human rights perspective.”

Great efforts have already been made to build links between the landmark anti-landmines and disability rights conventions. “Reinforcing the bridge between the two will be important in achieving common aims in the years ahead,” said Kerry Brinkert, the Director of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention’s Geneva-based Implementation Support Unit, which is assisting Colombia in staging the event. “We are hopeful that the leading actors in the worlds of health care, employment and international development will see this event as a chance to advance this common agenda.”

“***Bridges between Worlds*** is a chance for the international community to deepen the relationship between the landmine movement and broader domains such as disability, health, education, employment, development and poverty reduction,” added Kerry Brinkert, noting that the conference will take place 15 years after the entry-into-force of the Convention and on the eve of its third review conference.

The location of the event is significant for a number of reasons, Colombia, which joined the Convention in 2000, is heavily affected by landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

explosives and has a high number of landmine survivors. In addition, the host city Medellin is located in the Department of Antioquia one of the most affected in the country registering since 1990, a fifth of all landmine casualties in Colombia.

Furthermore, the meeting takes the issue of victim assistance back to Colombia where in 2009, the international community adopted the *Cartagena Action Plan* - which calls on States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the international community and other relevant stakeholders, to promote and protect the welfare and human rights of landmine survivors and mine-affected communities.

Funding for the conference is being provided by Colombia along with the European Union, the latter seeks to support States Parties in overcoming challenges in implementing the Convention through a two-year Council Decision. The European Union has already funded workshops around the world to advance the integration of landmine victim assistance efforts into broader disability contexts.

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