

**PRESENTATION OF THE REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE
DEADLINE TO COMPLY WITH ARTICLE 5 OBLIGATIONS
STATE PARTY: COLOMBIA**

Your Excellency,

First of all, I would like to express Colombia's great support to your work as this Conference's President. Your work has consolidated the Convention's future perspective and The Cartagena Plan has offered all the State Parties a solution to overcome the inhumane lash of antipersonnel mines. On behalf of the Colombian Government, I would like to thank you once again for your commitment to achieving a mine-free world.

Last Sunday Colombia elected a new President and Vice-President, who will surely continue the current government's efforts to recover the development of territories contaminated with antipersonnel mines, as well as to guarantee the full reinstatement of the victims' rights.

On behalf of the Vice-President of Colombia, I would like to thank you and all the State Parties for your support and interest in promoting actions to help solve this problem.

This time, I wish to present to the State Parties of the Convention the reasons that drive Colombia to request a 10-year extension to the deadline established in Article Five to destroy all minefields under the Colombian government's control and jurisdiction.

This presentation is divided in four parts. The first makes a brief introduction to the general characteristics of the contamination in Colombia. The second justifies the extension request. The third lists the technical and methodological considerations that justify the 10 year extension request. Finally, the fourth part presents the action plan foreseen by Colombia to be implemented.

Colombia has a territorial extension of one million, one hundred and forty one thousand square metres, inhabited by nearly forty five million and three hundred thousand people. It is a country of average income and was labelled as one of the countries with a high human development index in the latest measurement conducted by the United Nations Development Programme.

The Colombian territory is known for its geographic diversity. 19% is part of the Andes mountain range, 35% of the Amazon rainforest, 22% of internal plains and 23% of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans' coastal areas.

As far as its political division is concerned, Colombia is composed of 32 departments, which are divided into 1,098 municipalities. These municipalities are in turn divided into towns and townships.

The country's situation of affectation by antipersonnel mines is explained by the existence of illegal armed groups that constantly defy the democratic institutions and use this kind of weapons with increasing recurrence. In this sense, the reasons why it hasn't been possible to meet the requirements of Article Five of the Convention should

discriminate between two affectation types: the regular contamination of military bases and the irregular contamination caused by the Illegal Armed Groups' violent actions.

On one hand, and before signing the Convention in 1997, Colombian Law Enforcement used antipersonnel mines as a mechanism to protect 35 military bases located in different places within Colombian territory.

The contamination pattern of these bases was complied to the regular military doctrine and followed the marking requirements established in the Second Protocol addendum of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. An evidence of the adherence to the parameters therein established is the fact that no accidents related to civilians have been registered in these fields until this moment.

As far as the second contamination type is concerned, this is the result of the illegal armed groups' actions. Even today these organizations continue to produce and use antipersonnel mines against Colombian and international Law, as well as what has been established by International Humanitarian Law.

According to PAICMA records, 64% of Colombian municipalities have registered at least one event related to antipersonnel mines. The database shows a total of 10.901 events registered for the 2002 – May, 2010 period. Thanks to this information, it has been possible to identify nine areas of concentration of the problem, which converge with strategic areas of interest for Illegal Armed Groups' actions.

The affectation has been labelled as irregular, as it answers to the *nuisance mining* logic. Furthermore, the antipersonnel mines used by illegal armed groups are improvised explosive devices, as they are handcrafted and made with materials that make them difficult to detect and are designed to increase the damage usually caused by this kind of artefacts.

A total of 8.446 antipersonnel mine victims were registered for the 1990 – May, 2010 period. As shown in the chart, the number of victims has decreased during the past few years, particularly during last year.

Colombia's two arguments to request the extension: the Colombian Government's full commitment during the first ten years of the Convention; and the exceptional contamination situation given the violent actions of Illegal Armed Groups.

The first one is related to the Colombian government's successful work carried out to overcome the first type of antipersonnel mine contamination: that of military bases.

It is worth noting that the Colombian Government used its available capacity to destroy the minefields, meeting the highest quality standards. Thanks to this effort, the 35 military bases reported will be completely cleared by July, 2010.

These operations have allowed the clearance of 157.249 square metres, and the destruction of 3.338 industrial mines and 131 unexploded ordnances.

Such progress is an argument in favour of Colombia's extension request, as it evidences the Colombian Government's commitment to the spirit of the Convention.

The country's improved technical Humanitarian Demining capacity is an expression of this commitment.

Between 2005 and 2010, eight Humanitarian Demining units have been created, within the Armed Forces, that is, 320 men dedicated to mine clearance works. Such strengthening has been possible thanks to the gradual modernization and strengthening of the mine action institutions in the country.

The second argument has to do with the fact that the remaining challenge is the product of an exceptional situation, where criminal organizations continue to systematically use these banned artefacts

As previously mentioned, there is still uncertainty about the cessation of contamination, which makes it impossible to determine the scope, nature and extent of the remaining challenge with accuracy. Thus, while illegal armed groups continue sowing mines, the contamination's layout and extension changes permanently.

Following on the above, the second circumstance has to do with the unavailability of complete information about the antipersonnel mines' location. Since illegal armed groups do not follow any regular military doctrine, aside from the tactical intention of making such artefacts undetectable, the identification of the mined areas is an expensive process. Furthermore, the problem is widely spread throughout the national territory.

The information available on the contamination caused by illegal groups' actions is irregular and fragmented. At February, 2010, the IMSMA records a total of 10.901 events related to antipersonnel mines – of the total number recorded, only 29% include specific geographic coordinates.

Despite the aforementioned difficulties, the Colombian Government has implemented Humanitarian Demining operations in communities affected by the contamination of antipersonnel mines planted by illegal armed groups.

During the first five months of 2010, over seventy four thousand square metres have been cleared in 6 affected municipalities. Such progress implies the gradual development of information management onsite, adjusted to the specific features of national reality and the increase of the demining capacity.

Based on the cumulative experience on the implementation of demining operations in affected communities and on the additional information available in IMSMA, the Colombian Government sets up its 10-year extension proposal based on a couple of technical proposals: the initial estimate of an area to be checked through non-technical land release mechanisms and eventually clearance through technical clearance methods; and, the definition of a progressive model to meet the obligations, considering the uncertainty regarding cessation of contamination.

In order to move forward with the estimate of the contamination's extent, and taking into account the aforementioned limitations and restrictions, a model was designed to estimate the area to be cleared during the term of the extension request, that is, the 2011 – 2020 period.

Onsite evidence has made it possible to verify that, aiming to increase damage probability, illegal groups sow more than one antipersonnel mine in the same area. Therefore, the contaminated area was calculated based on the definition of five thousand square metres of suspicious area per each of the 10,901 events included in the IMSMA between 2002 and 2010. Thus a total contaminated area of 68.1 km² was estimated for 2011.

The model supposes that, based on experience, it is possible to dismiss 60% of the estimated suspicious area by implementing Non-Technical Surveys, and the remaining 40% must be cleared in order to be released.

Secondly, Colombia suggests a progressive model to fulfil the commitments acquired through Article 5, based on the progress made in the establishment of security conditions.

To date in Colombia the Government's policy to face the threat posed by illegal armed actors is the Democratic Security Policy. The policy suggests three phases. The implementation of humanitarian demining is only sustainable in third-phase areas, in the sense that illegal armed groups have already been cast out from there and thus it is possible to guarantee the necessary stability conditions for the proper functioning of State-owned institutions.

Taking this into account, the definition of the challenge will always be partial and limited to those regions where the third phase is going on. Therefore, Colombia disregarded the possibility of requesting an initial extension for a short length of time.

Based on these particularities, Colombia suggests a ten-year extension request with two components:

A first component that specifies the goals established for the ten-year extension request in terms of strengthening the required capacities to release the 120.5 km² estimated for 2020.

The second component is based on the suppositions of a progressive model in terms of conditionality of the progress achieved in demining to the consolidation of safety conditions and, therefore, it establishes an initial three year action plan. This plan will be updated every three years as to reflect the current conditions in terms of possibility of intervention in Colombian municipalities, based on the dynamics of the Democratic Security Policy's progress.

The General Plan of Action for 2011-2020

It includes three lines of work: consolidation of task and resource assignment tools, information management qualification and increase of land release capacities.

The first line of work establishes a set of actions to qualify the procedures through which location, dismissal and clearance tasks are assigned; and resources are prioritized. This line of work is estimated to represent an investment of USD\$110,000 and activities will be executed during the first year of the 10-year requested period. In fact, some of them are already under way.

The second line of work makes reference to the optimization of information gathering processes and methods with operational purposes, and it represents an investment of USD\$1'315,000.

Finally, the third phase sets forth activities related to improving the capacity to implement technical and non-technical release methods, based on the combination of the Colombian government's Humanitarian Demining capacity and the participation of civil organizations specialized in the matter. This process will require an estimated investment of USD\$227.6 million.

Regarding the improvement of the Colombian government's technical removal capacity, the number of platoons is expected to increase up to 25 in 2020, which will represent an estimated investment of USD\$92.1 million. As far as the civil organizations' capacity is concerned, two teams are expected to be carrying out Humanitarian Demining works in 2011, thirty in 2015, and forty-nine in 2020. An investment of USD\$180.2 million is estimated throughout the entire period. Finally, the number of Non-technical survey teams is expected to increase from 15 in 2011 to 30 in 2020, which represents an investment of USD\$5.3 million.

With the developed capacities, Colombia is expected to fulfil the obligations acquired through Article Five, insofar as it can release the entire 120.5 Km² worth of suspicious area as follows: 72 km² through non-technical mechanisms; and, 48 km² through technical mechanisms.

The extension request's second component corresponds to the three-year operational plans, the first of which corresponds to the 2011-2013 period.

14 municipalities will be intervened with the demining platoons of the Government during the 2011-2013 period. These municipalities were chosen due to the fact that 17% of contamination is concentrated there and that they have optimal security conditions to implement Humanitarian Demining actions.

However, it should be noted that the 2011-2013 plan does not specify the destination of the capacities developed by civil organizations, which could release close to 5Km² through technical and non-technical mechanisms, because the regulation of the humanitarian demining operations by civil organizations is not yet in place.

One Humanitarian Demining platoon will be assigned to each municipality selected. Throughout the three years, 80% of these 14 municipalities' contamination will be cleared through technical and non-technical mechanisms, and two of them will be declared as free of antipersonnel mines. Thus, a total of 5.52 km² will be released through non-technical surveys, and 3.68 km² through technical methods.

The Government's resources to execute the general humanitarian demining plan for 2011, 2012 and 2013 will be distributed among the fourteen municipalities according to the operational needs. By the end of this period, the Colombian Government has invested close to \$22 million dollars in the action plan.