



HOLY SEE

Intervention of
Reverend Ignazio CEFFALIA

Head of the Delegation of the Holy See
at the Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction

Phnom Penh, 28 November – 2 December 2011

Mr President,

At the beginning of the eleventh meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, the Delegation of the Holy See would like to express its congratulations to you, and to assure you of our cooperation. We would like to thank especially the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the warm welcome and for the facilities that they have offered.

After almost fifteen years since the adoption of the Ottawa Convention, we can recognize with a spirit of appreciation that it has become a fundamental norm in the “corpus” of international humanitarian law and a tangible example of international solidarity. This is due to an enormous amount of work done by numerous parties who have collaborated and continue to collaborate on its implementation: governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, among whom there are distinguished voices which bring the concerns and experience of victims of anti-personnel landmines.

In fact, there are many positive results arising from the battle against anti-personnel landmines since the coming into effect of the Convention, seen both in the reduction in the number of them which are produced, bought and used, and in the lower numbers of victims of these weapons. In regard to this last point, it is worth noting the innovative approach which has been adopted: an approach aimed at confronting those aspects of individual and communal rehabilitation and of socio-economic reconstruction, not least in the necessary promotion of education and awareness raising. Furthermore, this approach is based on a triple definition of the term "victim of anti-personnel landmine", which includes individuals directly wounded, their families and the communities involved.

Having said that, there are numerous challenges which must be confronted along the way leading to a world free of anti-personnel landmines, as this goal touches on multiple and complex interrelations in the area of humanitarian, disarmament and development work.

In this sense, the correct realization of the 2009 Cartagena Action Plan is surely the right direction to follow. An attentive reading of this important document cannot but recall the necessity on the part of all actors involved in the anti-personnel landmines process of the struggle to reinforce efforts intended to promote the universalization of the Convention and a partnership which will consolidate cooperation and assistance, as well as sustain the transparent furtherance, on the part of the States Parties, of the objective of stockpile destruction and landmine clearance.

The real value of the Convention, however, can be measured by the impact that it will have on victims of anti-personnel landmines. It has already been noted how these mines place a grave restriction on development and how it is necessary to draw up in advance an adequate post-conflict process not only with regard to the reconstruction of infrastructure, but also of human communities, social norms and economic activity. Reconstruction risks being slowed down by the presence of landmines in the ground. It is also well known that the problem of anti-personnel landmines requires the involvement of all humanitarian, social and economic players to resolve it.

The Holy See firmly renews its appeal for a greater effort to be made in support the victims of such weapons, a task which we believe should be a priority for all. As well as the victims directly affected by this problem, it is necessary to adopt a global approach which takes into consideration wounded families and communities. Individual and communal rehabilitation, socio-economic reconstruction and socio-political reintegration are to be treated as an ensemble of issues, if we wish to arrive at effective and economically responsible solutions which truly respect the dignity of the person. An essential aspect in this context is to listen to communities touched by anti-personnel mines and, together with them, to respond to their short- and long-term needs. In this perspective, education and formation should be reaffirmed as essential means along the path leading to social, economic and political reintegration.

Mr President,

Assistance to victims cannot be disassociated from actions in favour of development. Many victims live in countries which are characterized by war and by extreme poverty. To confront such a problem seriously, well-coordinated action is necessary, whose goal is to promote the conditions for a truly integral human development. This also requires, every day, the renewal of political and humanitarian will, as concrete commitment to free humanity from these terrible and insidious weapons which impede men and women from walking together along the path of life without having to fear the snares of destruction and death.

Thank you, Mr President.