

**LTT for the Regional Stakeholders Dialogue on Humanitarian Demining:
The Americas as an Antipersonnel-Land-Mine-Free Zone
Support for Mine Action in Peru and Ecuador
(VTC, 10 February 2021, 15.00)**

Lines to Take

- Good morning, good afternoon Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Hello and welcome to all of you gathered here online.
- At the outset, let me thank the **Organization of American States the Governments of Ecuador and Peru and the Anti Personal Mine Ban Convention Secretariat** for organising such a timely and important event.
- I am also delighted to deliver **opening remarks** together with Secretary General of the Organization of American States, **H.E. Luis Almagro**; Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention President, **H.E. Robbert Jan Gabriëlse**; and International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Director, **María Pia Devoto**.

EU support for mine action

- The European Union has a **long history** of support to mine action.
- As of 2014, **all 27 EU Member States** are party to the Ottawa Convention.
- Support to international mine action remains among the **high priorities of EU foreign policy**. Years of experience have made the EU assistance progressively expand from mine clearance to include additional activities such as stockpile destruction, mine risk education and victim assistance.

EU support for humanitarian demining

- **Mine clearance** reduces the threat posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), allowing people to live safely, for refugees to return and for development to flourish. Clearing landmines saves lives and prevents innocent people from being harmed. Furthermore, clearing mines helps secure access to natural resources such as water and land for housing, agriculture and tourism, having thus a crucial impact on the daily life and income of individuals in affected areas.

- To date, 32 States Parties to the Ottawa Convention have obligations under **Article 5**, with only a handful in a position to meet their mine clearance deadlines by 2025.
- This poses a **great challenge** to our common ambition of reaching mine-free status in as many countries as possible by 2025. This trend can be reversed but only if we concert efforts and act strategically as part of the mine action community.
- For the European Union and its Member States all of which are party to this noble humanitarian disarmament treaty, **this challenge is not just cause for concern but also for action.**
- For supporting the Convention's ambition of a mine-free world by 2025 in as much possible as expressed in the Maputo Review Conference, the European Union Council adopted **Decision 2017/1428** in support of States Parties' efforts to meet (among others) their mine clearance commitments.
- We are delighted that through this Decision we can **support platforms for discussion as this one**, where the Organization of the American States (OAS) and the Governments of Ecuador and Peru, with technical backing of the Implementation Support Unit, are hosting this two-day meeting.
- The main objective of this event is to **raise awareness** of where we are in the fight against these weapons, but also on what is needed to bring the Americas to the brink of becoming the first mine-free hemisphere.
- **National ownership** is an important prerequisite for effective independent and sustainable mine action. Therefore, we are thankful to the **Vice Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador and Peru** for their engagement in this event. It shows once again that Ecuador and Peru are **truly committed** to meeting this obligation within the 2025 ambition.
- We are delighted that the **Governments of Chile and Colombia** will also share their experiences.
- We are grateful to **His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein of Jordan** for his participation.

- We particularly welcome the **participation of civil society and international organisations** represented here today by the **International Campaign to Ban Landmines** and the **International Committee of the Red Cross**, and other organisations that are essential for implementation of this treaty and achievement of its goals of ending the casualties and suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.
- And of course, we extend our thanks to the **Mine Action Office of the Organization of American States** for the initiative, and to all other participants for your interest and attending.
- This **approach for collective, less formal dialogue** falls within commitments adopted by the international community in the Oslo Action Plan, especially those related to “best practices for implementing the Convention”, “survey and clearance of mined areas”, “international cooperation and assistance”, “transparency and the exchange of information”.
- The European Union is particularly pleased for a **segment on donors’ perspective**, which will take place tomorrow. It is an opportunity for those in a position to provide assistance to share their perspectives on the implementation in Peru and Ecuador and how best they can support these efforts.
- **An Americas free of the threat of anti-personnel mines** continues to be possible and remains an objective not only through the OAS’ General Assembly Resolution, but also for the European Union and its Member States.
- A **coordinated, multi-stakeholder, regional approach** with the backing of an intergovernmental organization could provide the push that Ecuador and Peru require to finish their job.
- We will hear more on that as well tomorrow, including mechanisms available for financing and channelling support. For donors, this is an opportunity to contribute to **long-lasting, beneficial results for the region** as a whole.
- Today, however, we will centre our attention to where we are in terms of **contamination, successes, and challenges**.

Conclusions

- Ladies and gentlemen, a **mine-free hemisphere** is a noteworthy proposition for those of us who believe in the power of collectively protecting vulnerable communities.
- Therefore, we encourage parties seeking to receive or increase assistance and those in a position to provide assistance to, **forge strong partnerships where possible**, that can further the goal of a mine-free world. All States, Parties or not party, have a role to play in ensuring the safety of all, especially the most vulnerable.
- Let me reassure you that through **diplomatic and financial support initiatives**, the European Union will continue to be one of the leading actors in both supporting Peru and Ecuador efforts to accomplish their mine clearance obligation and making the world free of mines.
- Thank you for your attention.

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