

OPENING SESSION

Mired Al-Hussein's Speech

Your Excellency Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of **Ecuador** Mr. Arturo Cabrera Hidalgo,
Your Excellency Acting Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of **Peru** Mr. Francisco Tenya Hasegawa

Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Peru H.E. Diego Mellado

Ladies & Gentlemen,
Colleagues & Friends,

Let me start off by saying how delighted I am to be taking part with you in this important event. I wish, however, that we were meeting face to face in the usual manner and not virtually. Let us hope that we will soon be able to do so.

The Covid-19 pandemic has really taken a heavy toll on all of us...this last year has been truly awful. *Our sincere condolences go out to all families in Ecuador and Peru who have lost a loved one to the pandemic...may they rest in peace. And for those who are currently battling the disease we wish them a speedy recovery.*

Despite, however, the monumental challenges that we are all facing at present, we **MUST** remain optimistic, show resilience and get on with the work at hand...in any way that we can. May God protect you all and keep you safe and healthy.

When I was contacted some weeks ago and asked if I would be interested in participating in this dialogue, I immediately responded in the affirmative as I had the great pleasure and honour of conducting official visits to both countries in 2014, in my capacity as 'Special Envoy' of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, for just this specific purpose that we are discussing here today. The highlight of my visits was the private audiences that I had with the presidents of each country and the great interest and determination that I felt each leader attributed to the issue.

Both countries were determined to complete the clearance of their respective contaminated areas in a joint and cooperative manner and declare completion together before or at the 15th Meeting of States Parties that took place in Santiago, Chile at the end of 2016. While this was not possible, I commend Ecuador and Peru for their work together to jointly address affected areas on their common border. This cooperation between neighboring states is critical to the Convention and should certainly be emulated.

I want to express my appreciation to Ecuador and Peru for calling for this dialogue to share their remaining challenges and their requirements for assistance. I realize and appreciate that addressing the issue of cooperation and assistance, in a time when all countries are scrambling for resources to combat Covid-19 and its devastating economic impacts, is a hard pill to swallow. We have to, however, persevere and try our level best to ensure continued implementation of the Convention and to ensure adherence to our legal obligations and commitments.

I know the challenges personally, as my own country was affected by anti-personnel mines, and in cooperation with partners we were able to meet our mine clearance commitments under the Convention. Of course, there are competing priorities and resources are limited but all countries have to try to get ahead...and where possible the pursuance of one priority should not be at the total expense of all others. All countries...all governments have to deal with a multitude of complex matters in a concurrent fashion.

In addition, I think all of us participating in this dialogue, appreciate and understand fully the complexities of demining contaminated areas that are very remote, difficult to access and deep in the jungle. No doubt the matter is very difficult and not an easy challenge to fulfill. This being said...I honestly believe that nothing is 'impossible' and that with the right approach, will and determination the job can be done. If both Ecuador and Peru are able to jointly achieve this milestone in the near future it would really be tremendous and a shining example of how two countries that long ago were at odds, overcame everything and forged new, beautiful bonds of neighborly friendship based on mutual respect and cooperation. The significance of such an endeavor would serve as a model the world over. Rallying around their efforts to support completion will not be only a win for Ecuador and Peru, but will be a win for the entire community of States Parties.

I may be naïve and a dreamer to think that this matter can be easily achieved. I have this mindset because I have been intimately involved in the machinations of the Convention, as the Chairman of Jordan's national demining authority, as the President of the 8MSP that took place by the shores of the Dead Sea in my country in 2007, as well as one of the Special Envoys of the Convention since 2009. I had the unique privilege of chairing the first committee on extension requests during my time as President and have travelled extensively to all corners of the globe to encourage States not Party to accede as well as to engage with States Parties for the sake of getting them to recommit to the cause, staying focused and fulfilling their promises. I hence, in a very humble way, because of all that I have seen and experienced over the course of the last 17 years, honestly believe that both Ecuador and Peru have the wherewithal, knowhow and capability of putting this issue once and for all behind them...and **finally** moving on to combat and manage other critical matters of national importance.

I wish you all the success in your dialogue today and look forward to hearing from you a positive outcome.

Thank you.