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**Anti-Personal Mines (Landmines) in
Colombia: a Dynamic Problem**

Integral Action against Mines in Colombia

**COLOMBIA HEADQUARTERS OF THE
SECOND CONFERENCE FOR REVIEW OF
THE OTTAWA CONVENTION**



Anti-Personal Mines (Landmines) in Colombia: a Dynamic Problem

The situation affecting Colombia regarding anti-personal mines (APM) has as a main reference the continuous and systematic use of those artifacts by the illegal armed groups. Its use holds a latent risk due to the high and indiscriminate impact on the population, particularly those rural communities – where women, children and senior citizens are affected – and constitutes an infringement to human rights and to national and international legislation on the matter.

The situation of APM in Colombia is extremely complex since, contrary to other countries where the mines problem is a legacy of confrontations already surpassed, in Colombia those armed groups not only continue using those mortal artifacts but in the latter years its use has intensified. The problem has been renewed day by day and thus there is no certainty as to when will the contamination of the territory may cease.

These terrorist groups manufacture mines from different materials such as plastic bottles, toys or cans which they plant and which are difficult to detect by the humanitarian de-mining teams from the Armed Forces. Often, so that these mines are even more lethal, they use chemical mines and elements such as excrement to cover them so when the mine explodes, the parts of the body affected are thus infected. Likewise, nowadays they are starting to hang the mines from trees to avoid their detection.

The cost of production of one improvised APM is calculated to be from US\$1.00 to 3.00. For Colombia the estimated cost to de-mine a field is calculated in US\$100.000.



VICTIMS OF MAP/AEI/MUSE (ANTIPERSONAL MINES - MINAS ANTIPERSONALES), (EXPLOSIVE IMPROVISED ARTIFACTS – ARTEFACTOS - EXPLOSIVOS IMPROVISADOS), (MUNICIONES SIN EXPLOTAR – UNEXPLODED AMMUNITION) (1990 - 2008)

In Colombia, 90% of the anti-personal mines have been planted by FARC. Between 1990 and 2008, 7.451 Colombians were victims of anti-personal mines within which there are 372 women and 722 children. The planting of these mines has been an obstacle for the possibility of social and economic development of many communities in Colombia and has limited the exercise of the fundamental rights such as life, mobility and economic development.

In Colombia, the anti-personal mines are the cause of:

- Forced displacement
- Damage to the quality of life, particularly in the rural population of the country – children, women and senior citizens
- Problem affecting a great part of the Colombian territory.
- The victims are men (94,3%), of legal age (90,3%) and members of the Armed Forces (65,6%).
- 2.561 civilians (34%) have been affected by these artifacts. 28% of them were minors at the moment of the accident.
- In 31 of the 32 Departments some event has been reported and in 441 Municipalities some victim has been reported
- More frequent in: Antioquia, Arauca, Meta, Caquetá and Nariño
- 63,8% of the Municipalities register some degree of contamination by MAP/AEI/MUSE.
- Only in 2007, 904 Colombians were affected
- Danger for their localization of the schools perimeters, water sources, recreation sources, churches, roads, access roads and common places of transit.
- One of the main causes of forced displacement.
- In 2008, Colombia reported a minimum of victims due to anti-personal mines in the last five years.
- To April 2009, 214 victims had been reported, including 61 civilians and 153



- members of the Armed Forces of Colombia
- Economical damage

Integral Action against Mines in Colombia

As a response to the APM problem, Colombia signed the Ottawa Convention in 1997 and created an institutional infrastructure to:

- Recover the affected territories,
- Guarantee the full restoration of the rights of the victims
- Direct all related actions to the fight against mines
- Advance in launching preventions strategies

LONG-TERM POLICY- INTEGRAL ACTION AGAINST ANTI-PERSONAL MINES (2009-2019)

Principles

- This policy has as its main central purpose to create the conditions so that human, socio-economical and sustainable development of the communities is not hindered by contamination of its territory by MAP, AEI y MUSE.
- Differential focus of rights. Compliance of commitments contracted by Colombia within the framework of the Ottawa Convention.
- Resiliency of the measures adopted to respond to the dynamic character of the problem.

Strategic Axis

- The effective coordination of the Integral Action against Anti-Personal Mines at a national and territorial level allows to direct timely and sustainable interventions.
- Colombia has the institutional capacity to contain the territory's contamination with anti-personal mines, improvised explosive artifacts and unexploded ammunition and its effect on the communities.



- The communities are capable of appropriately administer the risks of anti-personal mines.
- The victims of anti-personal mines, improvised explosive artifacts and unexploded ammunition are successful in the process of reparation, physical rehabilitation and socio-economical inclusion.

Colombia complies with its commitments of the OTTAWA Convention – Integral Action against mines.

1. Destruction of the mines from the Armed Forces warehouses

- Cleansing of 12 of the 34 military bases with protective anti-personal mines devices planted previously to the ratification of the Ottawa Convention.
- Advances in the cleansing of the three contaminated areas by illegal armed groups with AEI and MUSE.
- At present, cleansing tasks are carried on in two additional bases and two mined areas in the Municipality of San Francisco (Antioquia) and San Jacinto (Bolívar).
- Destruction of 19.222 mines
- Conservation of 586 for instruction and training.

2. Destruction of mined fields under the jurisdiction of the Armed Forces

- Cleansing of 19 of the 32 mined fields under the jurisdiction of the Armed Forces has advanced, a task carried out in which 52.707 M² were cleared and 332 anti-personal mines were destroyed
- Colombia has planned to totally destroy them before 2011.

3. Humanitarian De-mining: This corresponds to the work of de-mining carried out to attend humanitarian events caused by the presence or by suspicion of the existence of anti-personal mines, which has two main actions:



a) Operations of Humanitarian De-mining:

Department of Humanitarian De-mining [headquarters at the Escuela de Ingenieros Militares (Military Engineering School) of the National Army]

- Colombia has a humanitarian de-mining company integrated by six squads exclusively dedicated to developing the activities of de-mining at a national level.
- Three of them are working in the destruction of mined fields under the jurisdiction of the Armed Forces and three in de-mining of the geographical areas with a greater level of affectation.
- Three new squads shall be added in 2009 and five in 2010 for a total of 14 squads.
- Under the strict supervision of the Presidential Program for Integral Action against Anti-Personal Mines, the OAS and the surveillance of the Inter-American Board of Defense according with the international action standards against mines and the national protocols of humanitarian de-mining.

b) Expansion of capacities for humanitarian de-mining:

Colombia is carrying out important efforts to complement the de-mining activities. Mechanical de-mining techniques and detection of mines with animals are to be incorporated. Permanent training is given to the de-mining teams to strengthen their response capacity to humanitarian emergencies.

- c) **Assistance to Victims:** It consists in improving the institutional capacity of urgent medical attention to victims from the moment the accident is known, as well as working in reducing the barriers in order to access to rights and to the integral rehabilitation system and to improve the quality of life in health, social inclusion and socio-economic reintegration.

The Integral Attention includes:

- Humanitarian assistance due to permanent disability.



- Humanitarian assistance due to death.
- Humanitarian assistance due to loss of assets or minor injuries without permanent disability.
- Education assistance to boys and girls victims or terrorist attacks.
- Subsidies through solidary credits.
- Transport subsidies.
- Medical, surgical and hospital assistance.
- Physic and psychological rehabilitation.

d) Education in Mine Risk (Educación en Riesgo de Minas (ERM))

- Directed towards civilians and oriented towards reducing the risk of damage caused by MAP and MUSE, through awareness and promotion of a culture of safe behavior.
- Diffusion of public information
- Title as Community Education Agent of Integral Action against Anti-Personal Mines in 16 offices of the National Learning Service (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje - SENA).
- Intervention strategies in areas and population of special vulnerability status.

e) Prevention Programs

- **Campaign +Art-Mines**

- This campaign warns on the risks and promotes prevention.

- **Campaign +Sports –Mines**

- It pretends to link national and international famous sports figures to spread messages of prevention for affected communities and of diffusion of the rights of the victims.



“The use of these artifacts restricts the Basic Rights such as Life and Freedom to Mobilize”

COLOMBIA HEADQUARTERS OF THE SECOND CONFERENCE FOR REVIEW OF THE OTTAWA CONVENTION

This year, Colombia is the headquarters of the Second Conference for Review of the Ottawa Convention. The country applied for it with the purpose of showing to the world the problems caused by the devastating effects of the anti-personal mines in the country and its commitment to totally eradicate these artifacts.

With this, the National Government seeks to prevent the threat to more affected communities and to create awareness on the necessary attention to the victims of deplorable and terrorist actions of FARC and ELN, since they are the main responsible for the planting of these arms in our country.

The following document shows the general framework on the problems, the advances and the commitments of Colombia in the matter of anti-personal mines.

COOPERATING COUNTRIES

In the topic of Anti-personal Mines, the countries cooperating with Colombia, are: Japan, United Kingdom, Norway, Canada, Spain, the United States, Switzerland, Belgium, the European Commission, OAS, UNDP and UNICEF.

Their action areas are:

THEMATIC DOCUMENT – LANDMINES



COOPERATING	WORKING AREAS
JAPAN	Integral Assistance to victims and Humanitarian De-Mining
SPAIN	Education on the Risks of Mines (ERM); Humanitarian de-mining, Integral Assistance to victims, Alliances with strategic actors
SWITZERLAND	Integral Assistance to victims and Education on the Risks of Mines (ERM)
UNITED STATES	Integral Assistance to victims of Humanitarian De-mining
EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Institutional Strengthening, Integral Assistance to victims and Education on the Risks of Mines (ERM)
UNITED KINGDOM	Institutional Strengthening and Humanitarian De-Mining
CANADA	Institutional Strengthening
BELGIUM	Institutional Strengthening
OAS	Institutional Strengthening
UNICEF	Advocacy, Education on the Risk of Mines (ERM) and Integral Assistance to victims
UNDP	Institutional Strengthening, Incidence in Public Policies, Support in the Construction of Alliances, Integral Assistance to victims