

THE 1997 OTTAWA CONVENTION MUST BE REVIEWED

17.10.2007

The 1997 Ottawa Convention on Landmines is a faulty and flawed instrument. It must be reviewed. Otherwise, the states that hastened to adhere to it must withdraw from it. There are compelling reasons for this position. In this statement, I will give the serious justifications that will convince all who would listen that the Ottawa Convention and its Protocols constitute a misleading agreement that was not properly understood from the beginning. If implemented, the Convention would lead to regrettable consequences. It has confused the necessary and the unnecessary, the harmful and the beneficial and the reasonable and the unreasonable. In the light of my clarification, it would become obvious that there is a need to reformulate it or to withdraw from it if it remains unchanged.

There are certain elements in the 1997 Ottawa Convention that serve the interest of humanity and therefore need to be implemented:

1. The removal of all anti-personnel and anti-tank landmines and other unexploded ordinance that continue to exist in nearly 60 countries despite the end of the military situation that necessitated their planting.
2. The treatment and rehabilitation of their victims.
3. The rehabilitation of the affected environments.

However, there are other elements in the Convention that cannot be accepted:

1. The complete prohibition of the manufacture and use of landmines.
2. The destruction of the stockpiles of landmines.

If we are truly interested in the safety of humanity and its living environment, we must take the following practical and bold steps in the field of armaments:

1. The complete prohibition of the manufacture and possession of weapons of mass destruction. Rather than landmines, the elimination of those weapons must be given absolute priority.
2. The elimination and prohibition of all offensive weapons.
3. The prohibition of the planting of mines in the land of others. The countries that do so must be obliged to complete the de-mining at their own expense and to compensate those affected by the mines.

Mines are not offensive weapons. They are not mobile. Their effects are not scattered by the wind. A mine is a passive means of defense. It is the weakest and simplest defensive weapon. It is the last means to defend the borders against enemies who want to cross them. It is the weakest means of defense of the national soil against those who want to occupy it. Without it, how could the homes and livelihoods of citizens be defended? If this simple defensive weapon is banned, how could the victims of aggression, who possess no effective offensive or defensive weapons, defend themselves against a stronger enemy capable of crossing their borders and occupying their land? Does not the ban of mines mean a ban of the right to defend one's borders, land, home and farm? Does it not mean recognition of the right of the enemy to cross the borders and infiltrate one's land in peace and security? The prohibition of landmines, the last and weakest means to defend one's land, means condemning the weak peoples to capitulation. It means that they have no way to defend themselves except with cudgels, axes and knives. This is precisely what the Ottawa Convention means.

Powerful countries do not need landmines to protect themselves. Mines are the means of self-defense of the weak countries. The strong countries, who are capable of storming the land of others and destroying them with their lethal strategic weapons, gave no thought to the needs of the weak that possess no offensive weapons; that have nothing but defensive weapons such as mines.

The countries most affected by landmines are the ones that were subjected to foreign aggression. Equally affected are the countries ruled by lackeys of

colonialism or puppet regimes that work against the national aspirations. They are the result of colonialism, aggression and foreign interference. Therefore, these evil practices must be prohibited so that we do not find ourselves compelled to use mines. Mines are the result of aggression, not its cause.

The Ottawa Convention must be reviewed. Otherwise, the states that hastened to adhere to it, or were hoodwinked into joining it, must withdraw from it. This is possible under article (20) of the Convention itself.