



**OPENING CEREMONY STATEMENT BY H.E. JUAN JOSE QUINTANA,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF COLOMBIA TO THE U. N. OFFICE
AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA
THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE CONVENTION ON THE
PROHIBITION OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES
JUNE 22, 2014**

Mr. President, distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I would like to express the gratitude of my Country for the generous invitation extended by the Government of Mozambique to be part of the board that will start kick the works of the Third Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines.

This is an event of historical importance in the life of this humanitarian disarmament Treaty, as well as for all of the States, International Organizations and Non Governmental Organizations committed to the goal of "*ending the suffering and the casualties caused by anti-personnel mines*".

I would like, as well, to congratulate His Excellency Henrique Banze, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mozambique, for his appointment as President of the Conference. I am sure that under his stewardship, this Conference will achieve concrete results, towards the elimination of this abhorrent weapons that indiscriminately affect all people.

The Review Conferences have both a symbolic and practical relevance for the future of the Convention. Every five years we gather to look back, learn from what has been achieved and face the challenges ahead of us.

These meetings present us with the opportunity to express our aspirations, propose improvement actions and reaffirm our commitments. We do this, through documents that set effective tools for the fulfillment of the objectives and the discharge of the obligations under the Convention, in the hope of guaranteeing the well being of our citizens.

Five years ago, in the historic city of Cartagena, Colombia had the honor of hosting the Second Review Conference, which marked the first decade of the implementation of this instrument. Today, I

am proud to bring to the beautiful city of Maputo the torch that has guided five years of hard work and progress towards a world free of mines.

The Mine Ban Convention has special relevance for my country, and consequently it is at the center of our national priorities. Colombia is one of the most affected State Parties in the world due to the constant use of anti-personnel mines and explosive devices by illegal armed groups.

Against this background, we ratified the Convention fourteen years ago, and have since then been adopting national implementation measures with particular emphasis on assisting victims and survivors. In this manner we have contributed to global discussions and shared our experiences with the international community, always inspired by the cooperative spirit of the Convention.

The Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World, held in in 2009, was the scenario to reaffirm the crucial importance of this international legal instrument, review its achievements, and the challenges remaining in order to strengthen its implementation and achieve its universalization.

The event was warmly welcomed by the State Parties and observers, over twenty organizations and international institutions and a dozen of NGOs. It was a meeting of the highest level that successfully sought to reaffirm the commitment of the States with the objectives and the effective implementation of the Convention.

Cartagena has made visible the progress achieved in providing relief and stopping the human tragedy and the negative socio-economic impact caused by the anti-personnel mines.

It also strengthened the actions aimed at the objective of a world free of anti-personnel mines. This is the legacy we bring to Maputo and that so enthusiastically the host Government welcomes today.

During the past five years we have advanced significantly towards the universalization of the Convention. Currently, 161 State Parties are members of this international family. Several State Parties have announced the destruction of their stockpiles and the clearance of mined fields.

The advance in the implementation of the Convention is particularly true in the area of accompaniment and assistance to the victims. The event "Building Bridges between worlds" held in

Medellin in April 2014, with the support of the European Union speaks loud about the need to continue to place the well-being of victims and survivors at the center of our efforts.

With the decided commitment of all of us, we will achieve the adoption of a robust Maputo Action Plan, as the guiding compass in all five pillars of the Convention, as well as a Political Declaration and a New Machinery. Documents that will further enhance the achievements of the Conferences of Nairobi and Cartagena.

On behalf of the Colombian Government, I would like to congratulate Mozambique for its leadership and for hosting this truly Global Review Conference. We assure you of all the support of Colombia in order to contribute with the success not only of this Summit, but also of all initiatives that aim to ensure a safer world for our citizens.

Thank you,

