

NON-OFFICIAL TRANSLATION

ARGENTINA, ITEM 10

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

At the outset please allow me to express the gratitude of the Government of the Argentine Republic to the Government of the brotherly nation of Colombia for the hospitality so kindly extended to the visiting delegations, and for the efforts made to ensure the making of this meeting a reality.

I would also like to congratulate H. E. Ambassador Jürg Streuli on the fruitful work carried out during the past year, and you, Madam Chair, for having been elected to chair this significant Review Conference that will surely contribute to the elimination of such a grave scourge of humanity as anti-personnel mines. I am confident that under your leadership and with the efficient support of the Vice-chairmen and the other members of the Bureau our discussions will let us achieve our objectives.

Madam Chair,

The Argentine Republic reiterates its deep commitment to the noble principles set out in the Ottawa Convention as is demonstrated by the permanent efforts that has carried out and that will keep doing with the aim to comply with the multiple aspects regulated by the Convention.

Among the said efforts the following stand out: the destruction of the anti-personnel mines stocks before the set deadline; the coming into force of national legislation and military rules of procedures in order to comply with the regulations set forth in the Convention; the setting up of the IMSMA system for mined area data processing and personnel training, a goal achieved thanks to the valuable assistance of the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining; and the elaboration of the Final Report of the Argentine-British Joint Working Group for the Feasibility Study on the clearance of landmines and UXOs in the Malvinas Islands.

This Final Report, submitted by Argentina on the occasion of the 8th States Parties Meeting held in Jordan in November 2007, was the result of a long and laborious bilateral negotiation between my country and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under the sovereignty formula agreed upon by the Argentine Republic and that country through the Agreements by Exchange of Notes signed on 11 October 2001 and 3 August 2006, respectively.

This work attained special importance if we take into account that it was developed within the context of the sovereignty dispute existing between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas, South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas as recognized by the United Nations.

Argentina and the United Kingdom have kept the Ottawa Convention States Parties informed on the progress made throughout this process by submitting periodical reports to the Chairmen of the Convention, having even extended this practice to their respective national reports in accordance with article 7 of the Convention.

The Final Report, which is available to the public since November 2007 on the Ottawa

Convention web-page, has made it possible to establish among other things the current situation regarding the number of mined areas on the Malvinas Islands and to reach an approximate idea about the number and kind of landmines and UXOs remaining in those areas. That Final Report concluded that potential clearance of landmines and UXOs in the Malvinas Islands is technically feasible though it presents some important challenges regarding logistical and environmental aspects.

Madam Chair,

Due to the illegitimate occupation of the Malvinas, South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Argentine Republic does not have open access to the Malvinas Islands and therefore finds itself impeded from fulfilling the goal set forth in article 5 of the Convention. In this context, the fulfillment of the humanitarian demining task by the Argentine Republic in the Malvinas Islands depends upon the United Kingdom's effective compliance with the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations' General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonization on the "Question of the Malvinas Islands".

As stated in the Interpretative Declaration made by the Argentine Republic upon ratification of the Ottawa Convention on 14 September 1999, the United Nations' General Assembly has recognized the existence of a sovereignty dispute between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland over the Malvinas, South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas by Resolutions 2065 (XX), 3160 (XXVIII), 31/49, 37/9, 38/12, 39/6, 40/21, 41/40, 42/19 y 43/25 on the "Question of the Malvinas Islands".

In turn, the Special Committee on Decolonization annually adopts a resolution on the same question in similar terms to those of the said resolutions, more recently on 18 June 2009.

Notwithstanding the reiterated call of the Organization of the United Nations and other international and regional forums for the resumption of the negotiations on sovereignty, the United Kingdom persists in its refusal to comply with all these calls from the international community.

Since its accession to the Ottawa Convention in 1999, Argentina has been among the countries to abide by article 5 in view of its jurisdiction over the Malvinas Islands although the *de facto* control over the archipelago still persists with the United Kingdom through the illegal occupation of this part of the Argentine national territory. For this reason the international community recognizes the existence of a sovereignty dispute and calls the only two parties to it to resume the negotiations to reach a prompt solution.

This situation has forced Argentina to submit an extension request regarding the deadline set forth in article 5 of the Ottawa Convention for the destruction of anti-personnel mines in mined areas, that is to say for the period from 1st March 2010 -when the original deadline for Argentina will expire pursuant to article 5 of the Convention- and 1st March 2020, with the firm intention to complete the humanitarian demining of anti-personnel landmines in the Malvinas Islands, the only area of the Argentine national territory affected by this kind of weapons.

The special and particular situation existing in the Malvinas Islands explains the

peculiarity of this case in the context of the article 5 of the Ottawa Convention. Indeed, the extension request submitted by Argentina for the maximum deadline is based on the impossibility to accede to the territory that, as said before, is subject to the British illegitimate occupation.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned, Argentina's extension request has been accompanied by a provisional demining plan based on the information collected in the Final Report on the Feasibility Study mentioned before and which constitutes the only source of information available to my country on this matter. On doing this, Argentina wishes to stress its firm purpose to continue to adopt the necessary measures to proceed to clear all landmines and UXOs remaining on the Malvinas Islands when it gets free access to the territory.

Madam Chair,

Taking into account the reasons already referred to, States Parties to the Convention are kindly requested to favourably consider the approval of the extension request made by Argentina in order to allow my country to continue complying with the commitments undertaken as a State Party to the Convention.

Finally, I am glad to stress the permanent support received by Argentina from the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining. I would also like to thank the brilliant work carried out by the Center in organizing this Meeting, which along with the efforts made by the Government and people of Colombia, ensure that States Parties make progress towards complying with the Ottawa Convention.

Thank you very much.