

Statement by Geneva Call, Cartagena, 04.12.2009

Excellencies, Dear Delegates,

First allow me to extend my highest congratulations to Colombia for the successful organization of this conference in such a beautiful location, and to Norway for its election to the presidency.

Marking the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention, and as a coincidence, the ten years of the existence of the Geneva Call *Deed of Commitment*, through which 39 armed non-State actors have expressed their total rejection of anti-personnel mines, it is a time for us, to reflect briefly on important steps done on the process of engaging non-State actors and on challenges ahead.

These important steps were...

1. When...the suffering of the forgotten populations living in areas under the control or the influence of armed non-State actors convinced NGOs and some national campaigns of the ICBL to advocate the engagement of non-State actors on anti-personnel mines.
2. When...the Declaration of the States parties meeting in Managua included for the first time wording supporting such engagement, after some initial skepticism, followed up progressively by several resolutions on the importance to engage non-State actors (by the African Union, the European Union, the OSCE, etc.). The complementary work of NGOs engaged in this field was clearly recognized.
3. When... non-State actors started to implement their obligations under the *Deed of Commitment*, for instance anti-personnel mines stockpile destructions. Victim assistance, demining operations, mine risk education were also carried out or facilitated by non-State actors for the benefit of the populations.
4. When... the UN Secretary General in his 2009 report to the Security Council on the “Protection of Civilians in armed conflict”, mentioned the need to engage non-State actors for humanitarian purposes and cited new approaches like the one developed by Geneva Call considered as a “successful example”.
5. When...., just last week, an international team of experts led by Geneva Call, was able, with the full cooperation of both the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, to carry out a thorough field verification of allegations of violations of the *Deed of Commitment*. This mission, the first of its type, shows that it is possible for parties to a conflict to agree on such fact-finding missions.

These are some of the important steps of these last 10 years.

Today we would like to thank all our local partners, States, UN agencies, the ICRC and other stakeholders which have been part of this successful story.

However, challenges remain

Let me share with you the most important ones.

- the difficulty to convince recalcitrant non-State actors – those which are impossible to reach, or those which remain in dialogue, but are not willing to abandon the use of anti-personnel mines.

- the security in the field putting colleagues at risk and the lack of resources, impeding mine action, so much needed in areas under the control or influence of non-State actors.

- the reservations of some States, both on the concept of the engagement of non-State actors, and/or on the specific work of Geneva Call.

- the lack of knowledge of the specific needs of the population living in areas where non-State actors operate and the inability of some mine action projects to address these needs appropriately. We have to learn more from them.

To conclude, we call on all States, party or not party, to consider the humanitarian engagement of armed non-State actors as a complementary work towards a mine-free world and to facilitate and support such activities.

Nobody has the right to ignore the needs of civilians living in the middle of a conflict.

Thank you for your attention