

18 November 2007

AGENDA ITEM 10

STATEMENT BY MINISTER GUILLERMO ROSSI, HEAD OF THE ARGENTINE DELEGATION TO THE EIGHTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND THEIR DESTRUCTION.

Thank you very much, Mr. President

Allow me first to express the gratitude of the Government of the Argentine Republic to the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for its hospitality, which has made it possible to hold this meeting. I also wish to congratulate His Royal Highness on having been elected Chairman of this important meeting with a view to contributing to eliminating this serious scourge for humanity, that is, antipersonnel mines. I trust that under His Royal Highness' guidance and with the collaboration of the Vice Presidents and rest of the members of the Bureau, our debates will meet the objectives set. Likewise, our delegation expresses its gratitude to the former President, Ambassador Caroline Millar, in particular the efforts made during her mandate aimed at universalising the Convention.

Mr President,

The Argentine Republic is deeply committed to the noble purposes of the Ottawa Convention and is pleased to submit to this States Parties Meeting the Argentine-British Joint Working Party's Final Report for the Feasibility Study on the Clearance of Land Mines in the Malvinas Islands.

This Final Report, adopted in October last, is the result of a long and arduous bilateral negotiation initiated in 1998 between my country and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Argentina and the United Kingdom have kept the States Parties of the Ottawa Convention informed on the progress made during this process through common information which was regularly submitted to the successive Presidents of the Convention and also extended this practice to the information detailed on this issue in their respective national reports in fulfilment of Article 7 of the Convention.

In accordance with the Agreements by Exchange of Notes under sovereignty formula of 11 October 2001 and 3 August 2006, demining, geology and environmental experts carried out a field survey on the Malvinas Islands during December 2006, monitored by officers of the Armed Forces of both countries. Afterwards, the above mentioned Final Report was made which contains the conclusions reached by the Argentine-British Joint Working Party.

Mr President,

This task is especially relevant when considering that it was carried out within the

context of the sovereignty dispute existing between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, recognised by the United Nations. However, during the process towards achieving its objectives, the JWP had to resolve situations deriving from the circumstances inherent in the sovereignty dispute.

One of those circumstances was the need faced by the JWP to contract a private company for carrying out certain tasks involved in the feasibility study. Another resulted from the fact that each of both parties to the dispute seek to comply with its obligations under the Ottawa Convention with regard to a territory which is a part of that very dispute.

In this context, it was necessary for the Joint Working Party to design and put into practice appropriate mechanisms to make it possible to select and contract a company suitable for rendering the requested services, avoiding the contract and the legal relationships consequently entered into being subject to a particular national legislation or a specific national jurisdiction.

Designing these mechanisms presented challenges for both delegations which demanded holding seventeen meetings of the Joint Working Party in order to explore the different alternatives before it and the progress made always entailed permanent consultations of both delegations with their respective authorities, a process which consumed a considerable amount of time.

I am pleased to thank the British Government for the cooperation atmosphere achieved by both delegations throughout this complex negotiation. I invite the delegations of States Parties to the Convention and all parties interested in the feasibility study to an informative meeting to be hosted by the Argentine and British delegations on next Wednesday.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to point out the permanent support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining to this project. I also thank the brilliant work of the Centre in organizing this Meeting, a task which along with the efforts of the Government and people of Jordan ensure that States Parties make progress in fulfilling the Ottawa Convention.

Thank you very much.