

# **The speech of mister the Lieutenant General AHMED GAID SALAH, Vice Minister of National Defense, Chief of Staff of the People's National Army during the final phase of the public destruction of stockpiled antipersonnel mines**

**Excellencies  
Officers,  
Honorable guests,**

It is a great honor for me to chair, on behalf of His Excellency, M. President of the Republic, Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces, Minister of National Defence, the ceremony of destruction of the remaining stockpiled anti-personnel mines possessed by the People's National Army, in conformity with our international commitments resulting from the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty, **on the Prohibition of the use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their destruction**, signed in Oslo on September 18th, 1997 and ratified by our country on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

On this occasion, allow me to welcome all our guests and to thank them for honouring with their presence this important event, which consists of the destruction of the remaining stockpiled anti-personnel mines in Algeria estimated at **5970** mines, which coincides with the commemoration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signature of the Ottawa Treaty.

Indeed, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, Algeria committed itself to work on two major axes, namely:

- 1- The destruction of all the anti-personnel mines it possesses, in accordance with articles 3 and 4.
- 2- The total clearance of the national territory of all types of mines which imperil people, in accordance with article 5.

Algeria, it should be pointed out, has been in the forefront in fighting this pernicious scourge, just after the recovery of its independence and national sovereignty, after a painful and a dark period spent under the French colonial rule which had not been limited to inflict to the Algerian people all forms of oppression, tyranny and persecution, but left behind it millions of anti-personnel mines, sowing desolation and death, killing innocent civilian populations, particularly among children, women and old men. These millions of mines were disseminated along our East and West borders, within the framework of the infamous "Challe and Morice lines".

Despite the complex nature of reliefs in some areas and notwithstanding the displacement of the mines, due to the climatic factors, especially erosion, the mission of fight against this scourge, executed by the combat engineer units of the National People's Army, was achieved on December 1st, 2016, with professionalism and without any incident, in accordance with the international standards of mine clearance, that is to say four months before the deadline set for my country in the frame of **Ottawa's Treaty**.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In this place, precisely, and on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004, His Excellency, President of the Republic, Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces, Minister of National Defence, stressed that Algeria wanted, through this ceremony of destruction of its stockpiled anti-personnel mines, to show its active and real adhesion to the approach taken by the international community, aiming at ridding the world of this fatal weapon.

His Excellency Mr. President of the Republic emphasized that "it were the particular circumstances Algeria had to face in this field, which have constrained us to initiate a decided process of mine clearance and cleansing of the national territory, long before the signature of the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997. Distinguished by its History and its firm attachment to the instruments of disarmament and human rights, Algeria embraced a noble cause, by adhering to this Convention ".

Lastly, Mr. President of the Republic added that "the signing and the ratification of this Treaty, by Algeria, as well as the operation of destruction of its stockpiled anti-personnel mines, constitute a giant step towards the final elimination of this fatal and blind ammunition. It is also an international commitment we wanted to honor, because Algeria has enormously suffered from the after-effects of this scourge and hopes that the provisions of this Treaty will be scrupulously respected by all ".

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The clearance of the Algerian territory of this abject, cruel and contemptible colonial legacy and the definitive abandonment of any detention of anti-personnel mines constitute an achievement, which is in line with the International Humanitarian Law. It is the same for the constant efforts deployed by Algeria to secure its people of all harms and scourges, and to create the conditions for economic development and social stability.

In this respect, precisely, almost nine (09) million mines (**8.854.849**) have been detected and destroyed and **62.421** hectares of agricultural and pastoral lands cleared. This operation was carried out in two principal phases, the first began in 1963 and continued until 1988, where **7.819.120** anti-personnel mines have been destroyed and **50.000** hectares of mined lands cleared. The second began in November 2004 and continued until December, 1st, 2016, where **854.186** anti-personnel mines have been destroyed and **12.421** hectares cleared and given to the local civilian authorities, allowing the concretization, through our Eastern and Western borders, of many development programs to the profit of the population, in addition to the re-establishment of security in all these areas, which heretofore represented a persistent danger to our fellow-citizens.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Without further elaboration, **the field test has always been for me more authentic and expressive than words**, I just would like to underline, on this occasion, that the results obtained today could not have been reached without the hard efforts and the rigorous and permanent follow-up on the ground, the whole undoubtedly inspired by a shared conscience, in more than one respect, by the actors, as for the challenges this concern presents on the national and international scales. This major concern imposed a draconian, sincere and intensive work whose completion was a source of personal and collective satisfaction, and even pride for having achieved the mission, for the love of God and the fatherland.

I would like, on this happy occasion, to express my entire satisfaction to the units and personnel of the People's National Army, who contributed, at high level of professionalism, to the achievement of these remarkable results.

Moreover, the Algerian program of human mine clearance was distinguished by the independent international experts, following the evaluations, carried out in 2014, 2015 and 2016, sponsored by the successive presidents of the Treaty Assembly of States Parties.

I also would like to seize this opportunity to address my warmest thanks to the countries as well as to the international organizations, which supported us, not only in the implementation **of Ottawa's Treaty**, but also for their salutary assistance and contribution to the clearance of the areas mined by colonialism, thus preventing our fellow-citizens from further suffering, knowing that this plague generated **7300** civilian victims, including **4830** during the revolution of national liberation and **2470** after independence.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our hope is great to see the fight of the international community against the anti-personnel mines fully implemented by 2025 and be welcomed. Nevertheless, the security of the planet, to be assured, requires from us efforts to confront and overcome other major challenges, including transnational terrorism and the causes of its persistence and propagation, particularly extremism in all forms, drug trafficking, money laundering, weapons and human trafficking; as many challenges just as devastating which should, as a result, challenge the international community, so do the anti-personnel mines.

At the end of my address, I would like to thank our honorable guests, as well as the representatives of the media, here present, while asking them to convey their testimony about our country's today achievement of the operation of the total and final destruction of the remaining stockpiled anti-personnel mines.

Finally, I would like to seize this occasion to reiterate the Algeria's call to the countries which have not already done so, to sign and ratify this Treaty, so as to ensure the globalization of its provisions.

**Thank you for your attention.**