

**Chairman
Compana Colombiana
Contra Minas**

Dear Sir,

On behalf of myself, the New Sudan Mine Action Directorate, and on behalf of my Government and the peoples of Sudan, allow me to thank you, the Colombian campaign, the Government of Colombia and the gallant, heroic people of Colombia for inviting us to attend your historic conference.

For unforeseen reasons, I could not make it to attend, otherwise our souls and blessings are in the conference hall with you. It would have been great to share our mutual experience physically with you but nevertheless we hope this, our message will convey our universal concern in the international attempt to address the contemporary havoc inflicted by landmines against humanity.

I come from Sudan, a country with longest armed conflict in Africa. Sudan boasts also the longest history of landmines dating back to Second World War. In its more than forty years of warfare landmines have been extensively used by the Government and the rebels (Non State Actors). Me in person, have laid mines for seventeen years and have been campaigning and clearing my own shit (landmines) for the last seven years while the political conflict is still going on.

Why? We discovered these simple facts too late but better late than never -

1. We discovered that we might end up with mines-land rather than home-land we are fighting about.
2. The very people we wanted to liberate or Government wanted to govern became the innocent victims including our own mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters.
3. Landmines denied everything basic to the survivors even in areas warfare is over for several years.
4. As combatants we came to discover that mines are not of any strategic or tactical importance. Their presence only impede civilised warfare causing unnecessary collateral damage most of whom are civilians.

In short, landmines are weapons, once in the ground, will not respect cease fire or cessation of hostilities. They are a weapons of choice against poor people as they don't kill Presidents, Generals or Members of Parliaments. They are just poor man's "nuclear bombs" and weapons of poor mass destruction. **Their use is a crime against humanity.**

Having realised all these, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA) declared a unilateral moratorium on the use of landmines in 1996 and signed Geneva Call Deeds of Commitment in the year 2000. The Government of Sudan reciprocated by signing the Ottawa Convention. Both sides initiated contacts with the assistance of Sudan Campaign to Ban landmines which resulted in Cross-Conflict ban on the use of Landmines, and initiation of humanitarian mine action all over the country. The cross-conflict cooperation was witnessed and signed by the UN in Geneva in the year 2002.

The logic of the Sudanese experience is that “landmines” must be depoliticised and you do not need to wait for a political Peace Agreement to save innocent lives.

Cross-conflict dialogue on issues of humanity do not amount to political legitimisation of rebels, terrorists, non-state actors or whatever name you may call them.

My brothers in Colombia, I appeal to you as people, your Government, and all the non-state actors laying landmines in that beautiful historic country named after the explorer Columbus to go on with your politics, but to save Colombia, considered here, as the roof of the continent from further landmines contamination.

Governments and liberation movements shall come and go, but the people of Columbia with their beautiful land shall always remain.

I appeal and salute in particular the President of Colombia to assist the Campana Colobiana contra mina to initiate dialogue between the non-state actors and the government of Colombia.

In Sudan, the cross-conflict dialogue created confidence among the Sudanese that resulted into a political settlement signed last month.

I appeal also to all Colombian community opinion leaders, the national press to support the Colombian campaign in the war of national salvation from landmines.

In the name of humanity may God direct you to the shining path of peace, progress, fraternity and national brother and sisterhood.

Thanks and regards

Mr Aleu Ayieny Aleu
Executive Director
New Sudan Mine Action Directorate, Sudan.