

Tuesday, 11 December 2007 - Strasbourg

Second EU/Africa Summit (Lisbon, 8 and 9 December 2007) (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group . - (PT) The Ottawa Convention was the result of a global and effective effort for a just cause which united and continues to unite governments, public opinion and non-governmental organisations. Even some States not party to the Convention, and unfortunately there are still 37, have already partially complied with the Convention.

This instrument therefore acts as a barometer for measuring the degree of participation of countries in the global community of values. As the Commissioner said, it is worth remembering what has already been achieved. Over a period of 10 years the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention have already destroyed more than 41 million mines. Last year alone, Serbia, Montenegro, Angola, Cyprus, Cape Verde and Latvia fulfilled their obligations and got rid of their mine arsenals. Thirty-eight out of fifty mine-producing countries ceased production, including four States not party to the Convention: Egypt, Finland, Poland and Israel.

However, the celebration of the Convention's 10 years of achievements should also be the occasion to highlight how much there is still to do. Ten States Parties have still not completely destroyed their arsenals which total 14 million mines. Two of the ten States Parties have significant arsenals of anti-personnel mines and do not envisage any measures for their destruction: they are Ethiopia and Iraq. The overwhelming majority of mines, however, are in the hands of States not party to the Convention. China alone still retains an arsenal of 110 million of these inhuman weapons, whilst at the same time continuing production. Even more shocking, perhaps because it is an ally of ours, alongside which European armies are fighting on fronts such as Afghanistan, the USA, another State not party to the Convention, not only continues to maintain an arsenal of more than 10 million mines, but also, last year, the Pentagon requested new financing for two new types of mines incompatible with the Convention.

It is to be hoped that the efforts of the American Congress will once more curb the generosity of the White House as regards the new toys of war.

The European Union still has its own glass houses with Finland and Poland continuing to refuse to ratify the Convention. That should not, however, stand in the way of Europe fighting for as broad an interpretation as possible of what constitutes an anti-personnel mine. It is scandalous to see how some in this Parliament insist on drawing distinctions based on the formal military definition of the device rather than on the nature of the damage it causes. A civilian blown up after activating an anti-vehicle mine is hardly going to be interested in the complexities of the technical terminology.

Tuesday, 11 December 2007 - Strasbourg

Second EU/Africa Summit (Lisbon, 8 and 9 December 2007) (debate)

Colonel Gaddafi, on his website and in the full-page advert he placed in the Portuguese press in the final days of the EU-Africa Summit, attacked the Ottawa Convention and defended anti-personnel mines as the weapons of the poor. There are some in this House who, like that criminal madman, want to interpret the Convention in such a way as to allow rich countries to develop and use more sophisticated versions of mines to meet a supposed military need. Finally, Mr President, faced with such obscene positions, the objective of the European Union should be simple: a world free of mines, all kinds of mines, and no more civilian victims of mines.