

Wednesday, 6 July 2005 - Strasbourg

A world without landmines

Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group . - (PT) I too was moved by the interventions by the President-in-Office of the Council and by the Commissioner, who referred to an incident that must have taken place during the Second World War. Yet statistics still show that 20 000 people a year are victims of mines or abandoned ammunition, of whom 8 000 to 10 000 are children, who are killed or mutilated, usually by anti-personnel mines. These immoral weapons continue to have a social, economic, environmental and humanitarian impact on the population, and thus represent an intolerable threat to the human safety of whole communities.

The Ottawa Convention is a huge step forward in the fight against this scourge, but much remains to be done, as we heard from Jody Williams and Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch on the information day arranged here in Parliament on 16 June. Quite apart from the international obligations to which the States Parties are subject, the international community has a duty to eliminate once and for all not only anti-personnel mines but any mines or devices that may kill or mangle indiscriminately. Countries such as my own which have placed mines in other countries in wars of a colonial nature, or otherwise, now have a special responsibility to help remove those mines and to support victim's rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Europe in particular must continue to play a leading role in this field and must extend that role to other aspects of disarmament. The production, trade and use of anti-vehicle mines, cluster munitions and light arms present challenges that must be addressed without delay; if not, the momentum will be lost. Member States and Members of the Commission need to show a united front and to speak with one voice. They must speak more loudly and more effectively to promote the universalisation of the Ottawa Convention on all international fora and in relations with third countries, emphasising the need for it to be ratified and implemented. To this end, EU countries that have yet to sign or ratify the Convention must do so without delay, and join the 144 countries that consider this and other aspects of global disarmament to be key elements in the lasting stability of our planet and everyone's security.

As the Nairobi Review Conference concluded, the priority is to work towards a world free of mines. We owe that to the thousands of communities whose development has been undermined by these and other weapons that kill and mangle at random. We owe it to them in the name of human rights, of human safety, of peace, of the very values on which the EU is based, and this is reflected in the resolution that we have tabled.