

GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO GALVANIZE POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

THIRD CONSULTATION WITH STATES ON IHL AND PEACE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026

COLOMBIA INTERVENTIONS

Guiding questions:

1. How can States improve adherence to humanitarian disarmament norms – such as arms transfer controls, prohibitions and legal review of weapons – to reduce the risk of IHL violations and prevent escalations?

INTERVENTION #1 (Already done)

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Colombia would like to express its gratitude to the International Committee of the Red Cross and express its satisfaction at being part of the co-leaders of this line of work, together with Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Qatar.

International Humanitarian Law, based on the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocols and customary law, constitutes an imperative normative framework for the protection of the civilian population and of the objects indispensable for its survival during armed conflicts. Its obligations, binding on all States, require the adoption of concrete measures through national policies, criminal, administrative and regulatory legislation, as well as

the accession to and effective implementation of relevant international instruments.

In this context, humanitarian disarmament is an essential tool to prevent serious violations of IHL, mitigate the effects of hostilities and reduce the risk of escalation. Rules on arms transfer control, specific prohibitions and legal review of new means and methods of warfare — in accordance with article 36 of Additional Protocol I — are key components in ensuring that military arsenals and technologies are used in strict compliance with IHL.

As mentioned above... Colombia believes that the multilateral disarmament and arms control architecture remains one of the most resilient pillars for the protection of humanitarian considerations. Even when consensus weakens or progress is incremental, these forums function as spaces of normative containment that preserve standards, legitimacy, and expectations of conduct. Even in adverse contexts, most states continue to mobilize to uphold the rules and resist the normalization of indiscriminate harm, placing the protection of civilians at the center of military decision-making.

Multilateral disarmament processes play a central role throughout the conflict cycle: first, by allowing for the assessment of humanitarian risks associated with new technologies and arms transfers; during, by reaffirming the continued applicability of IHL in the face of narratives that seek to subordinate it to military necessity; and then, by supporting remediation through demining, victim assistance, stockpile management and risk education. These practices confirm that humanitarian considerations are not ancillary to security, but the foundation of sustainable peace and development.

Looking ahead, preserving existing rules is not enough. It is imperative that multilateral disarmament remain normative and anticipatory, especially in the face of challenges such as autonomous weapons systems, which are not fully covered by current legal frameworks. Anticipatory governance — from design to doctrine to deployment — is an essential humanitarian responsibility to prevent

foreseeable harm and prevent the erosion of existing law. Humanitarian norms are failing not because they are irrelevant, but because the nature of conflict evolves faster than governance frameworks. Its resilience will depend on a multilateralism that is sustained, risk-oriented and capable of integrating humanitarian considerations into technical discussions.

Colombia has a long and proven track record in this area. Since 1953, with the surrender of arms by a first armed group in Casanare, the country has developed successive disarmament and reintegration processes. In the 1980s, progress was made with insurgent groups; between 2002 and 2006, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes were implemented for paramilitary structures; and after the signing of the Final Peace Agreement of 2016, the laying down of arms by the FARC-EP marked a milestone towards stabilization, reconciliation and the consolidation of territorial peace.

Colombia's constitutional and legal framework, including Law 418 of 1997 and its successive extensions and updates, has made it possible to translate international obligations into effective tools for disarmament and reintegration. These regulations have facilitated measures such as temporary location zones, humanitarian demining programs and protection mechanisms for those participating in peace processes, integrating humanitarian disarmament standards and the obligations derived from instruments such as the Ottawa Convention.

The Colombian experience shows that disarmament processes are only sustainable when they are accompanied by political, social and economic guarantees, avoiding the stigmatization of ex-combatants and promoting their full, safe and dignified reintegration. This approach is complemented by environmental protection, livelihood recovery and strengthening community resilience.

Colombia has fully incorporated into its domestic law the obligations of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines, including the absolute prohibition of their use, production, stockpiling and transfer, as well as their criminalization. The country has a National System of Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines, led by a civilian authority, which articulates military, civilian and humanitarian actors to comply with the obligations of demining, comprehensive assistance to victims and risk education, under planning based on humanitarian risk and focused on the protection of the civilian population.

INTERVENTION #2

2. What good practices exist for incorporating disarmament commitments (such as arms control measures or disarmament, demobilization and reintegration arrangements) into peace negotiations in order to build confidence, protect civilians and foster lasting agreements?

Mr. President,

Colombia's experience shows that the effective incorporation of disarmament commitments — including arms control measures and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration provisions — into peace processes is essential to building confidence, protecting civilians and ensuring the durability of agreements.

First, it highlights the role of **international verification** in the surrender, deactivation and destruction of weapons. In the processes with the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the participation of international organizations provided neutrality, credibility

and transparency. The combination of specialized technical and military capabilities, together with robust monitoring and verification mechanisms, facilitated agile communication between the parties and made it possible to implement safe and reliable disarmament processes.

A second fundamental element has been the **comprehensive reincorporation of ex-combatants**. Our experience shows that the economic, political and social participation of those who lay down their arms is indispensable for consolidating peace. Reintegration programmes, led by the competent national authority, have promoted access to decent housing, job training and labour inclusion, while strengthening social cohesion in the territories most affected by the conflict. These measures increase the legitimacy of the process and create material conditions that deter the recurrence of violence.

Colombia has also successfully incorporated commitments to **action against antipersonnel mines** into the negotiation and implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement. Action plans derived from humanitarian disarmament treaties, especially the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, were coherently integrated into national public policies and strategic territorial stabilization frameworks. Among the most relevant advances are:

- **Alignment between the commitments of the Convention and national planning**, integrating verifiable objectives, indicators and timelines into mine action plans, sectoral policies and the implementation instruments of the Peace Agreement.
- **The adoption of international mine action standards** as a mandatory technical reference for demining, risk education and victim assistance, ensuring safer, more transparent and high-quality operations.
- **Humanitarian demining as a confidence-building measure**, initiated even before the signing of the Agreement through joint pilots that reduced

immediate risks to civilians and demonstrated tangible commitments to protection.

- **The articulation of demining with DDR processes**, making the disposal of explosive devices an enabling condition for territorial security, reincorporation and local development.

Taken together, these lessons show that integrating disarmament commitments and rigorously applying international standards strengthens coherence between International Humanitarian Law and peace processes. It also makes humanitarian disarmament an effective tool for building trust between the parties, protecting civilians and building a stable and lasting peace.

Thank you very much.

INTERVENTION #3

- 3. How can disarmament measures, such as demining, stockpile destruction, weapons collection and environmental remediation, contribute to recovery, the safe return of displaced persons and long-term resilience?**

Mr. President,

Disarmament measures — including demining, stockpile destruction, weapons collection and environmental decontamination — are not simply technical interventions. They are essential tools to de-escalate violence, protect civilians and open sustainable pathways to recovery and territorial stability.

When the risks associated with the presence of weapons and explosive devices are reduced, a basic condition is enabled to rebuild trust and restore the social

fabric. Removing weapons from the territories allows communities to begin a transition to an environment where legality, security and citizen participation prevail. This is a powerful message for both affected communities and those who choose to lay down their arms: peace is viable and can translate into real opportunities for a dignified life.

However, these measures only reach their maximum impact when they are articulated with policies of social inclusion, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition. The surrender and destruction of weapons is a concrete step towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts, but it must be integrated into broader strategies that promote reconciliation and strengthen the presence of the State.

In the case of Colombia, mine action is a clear example of how disarmament can translate into recovery and resilience. Humanitarian demining has freed up productive land, opened roads, restored basic services and facilitated the safe return of thousands of displaced people. Each cleared area becomes a space for agriculture, education, mobility and economic reactivation. It is, literally, the transformation of the territory to make life possible.

In addition, the destruction of stockpiles and the disposal of remnant explosive ordnance reduces residual risks and prevents accidents in post-conflict periods. This not only protects civilians, but also sends a clear signal of commitment to security and stabilisation. The communities recognize these advances as tangible gestures of state will, which strengthens trust and institutional legitimacy.

Risk education and comprehensive assistance to victims are equally indispensable pillars. These measures increase community capacities, foster self-protection and improve resilience in the face of challenges that remain even after the end of hostilities. They prepare the population to identify dangers, reduce vulnerabilities and move towards a horizon of greater security and well-being.

Finally, the true sustainability of these actions depends on their articulation with processes of rural development, land restitution and comprehensive reparation. When disarmament measures are integrated into a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, they become an engine of structural transformation. They allow the affected territories not only to overcome the impacts of the conflict, but also to strengthen their social cohesion and build lasting peace from the ground up.

Humanitarian disarmament should therefore not be understood solely as a technical or risk-mitigation intervention. It is a strategic investment in resilience, inclusion and stability. Every weapon withdrawn, every mine neutralized and every territory subjected to environmental decontamination represents a concrete step towards societies that are safer, more cohesive and more capable of sustaining peace in the long term.

Thank you very much

INTERVENTION #4

4. What national approaches or institutional safeguards encourage adherence to disarmament treaties, avoid withdrawals or suspensions, and thus contribute to sustaining peacetime commitments in the context of the armed conflicts they seek to mitigate?

Mr. President,

Sustained adherence to disarmament treaties — and the prevention of withdrawals or derogations — depends on comprehensive **national approaches** and **institutional safeguards** that transcend a single State entity. When these elements become State policies, the obligations agreed upon in peacetime remain in force even in the face of the challenges posed by armed conflict.

In general terms, States strengthen their commitment through solid regulatory frameworks, technical authorities with clear mandates, long-term strategic planning, transparency and accountability mechanisms, and human security approaches that ensure the social ownership of these commitments.

Colombia's experience demonstrates how these principles become operational and sustainable, especially in the face of the commitments made under the Convention on the Prohibition of Antipersonnel Mines. Colombia has deployed a national approach that includes a **specialized civil authority**, with a clear legal mandate and capacity for intersectoral coordination; broad **institutional support**, which involves sectors such as defense, foreign affairs, planning, health, education, social inclusion, and territorial authorities; and the **integration of mine action into development plans, peace policies and stabilization frameworks**, which consolidates these commitments as a true State policy.

Likewise, the **national appropriation of the obligations of the Convention**, complemented by international cooperation but anchored in domestic capacities, and the construction of a **shared humanitarian and human rights narrative**, have made it possible to position mine action as an ethical and legal responsibility of the State towards the civilian population. These elements have contributed decisively to institutional continuity, the stability of commitments, and the reduction of the risk of setbacks, even in contexts of persistent armed violence.

Taken together, this institutional architecture demonstrates that the strengthening of national frameworks, the involvement of multiple sectors of the State, and the social ownership of commitments are key factors in ensuring stable adherence to disarmament treaties and in ensuring that international obligations remain in force and effective in practice.

Thank you very much.

