

# *Colombia Plans to Launch De-mining Program*

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Bogota, April 13 (RHC-Xinhua) -- Colombia is to launch a de-mining program after a peace agreement with rebels is signed, said the Colombian Defense Ministry on Tuesday.

"Humanitarian de-mining is one of the most important challenges facing the implementation of the peace agreements, because we need to move very fast to meet the goal to have a mine-free country by 2021" Colombian Deputy Defense Minister Martinez Cuellar said in a statement.

Cuellar met U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller on Tuesday, focusing on a humanitarian demining program, according to the statement released after the meeting.

The Colombian government is planning to launch a rapid response strategy in some 250 municipalities in a bid to ensure peace in rural regions that have strong guerrilla presence.

The United States, through its cooperation agency USAID in Colombia, and Norway are helping the Colombian government in demining. Colombian authorities said some 2.58 million square meters of field have been cleared across the country with the destruction of 5,230 landmines in 19 municipalities by civil and military organizations.

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