



Cooperation, Assistance and Confidence Building through Mine Action

A Canadian Perspective

Almaty 26 and 27 March 2007

1

I have been asked to speak briefly on cooperation and assistance in mine action. My aim then, is to set the scene for our further deliberations on cooperation and assistance.

Of course one of the benefits of being a speaker is that once the floor is turned over to you, you can speak about whatever you want. I promise to talk about cooperation and assistance but will also take the opportunity to make a few brief remarks on mine action and confidence building and to provide a brief outline of one regional approach to solving the mine problem, the Organization of American States.



The Framework for Mine Action

What is Mine Action?

- Mine Risk Education
- Demining
- Victim Assistance
- Advocacy
- Stockpile Destruction

2

While we have heard a lot about mine action, I think it useful to briefly review what mine action is. We often think of mine action just as mine clearance. While mine clearance is an important component of mine action it is only one piece of the puzzle. Mine action has been defined as consisting of mine risk education, demining, assisting victims, advocacy and stockpile destruction. You need most if not all of these elements if there is to be an effective mine action programme.

Mine risk education obviously is aimed at reducing victims, victim assistance about helping landmine survivors and demining about returning land to useful productivity while creating no more victims

. On the other hand advocacy and stockpile destruction are really about making sure no more mines are placed in the ground to create even more victims. In fact without a framework to ensure that no more mines are laid, **we will never get this job done** creating more victims without solving the basic problem.



The Framework for Mine Action

Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

"The Ottawa Convention"

3

I would argue that the Ottawa Convention forms the most effective framework for dealing with all of the components of mine action.



The Convention as a Cooperation and Assistance Tool

4

Most states coming out of conflict, if not all, lack the financial, technical and material needs and some or all of the personnel expertise to address the humanitarian and development issues related to landmines and explosive remnants of war that might arise from that conflict. This has been evident in the past in the clean up in Asia, Africa and, most recently in the Middle East.

In recognition of this difficulty, international agreements that address to some extent both humanitarian and disarmament subjects, have evolved in part to deal with the post conflict effects of unexploded ordnance and landmines. Arguably these new treaties enacted from a humanitarian concern, contain many similar provisions.

In my view to this point, we have only one example of the actual implementation of a multi-lateral assistance mechanism – the Ottawa Convention. While other instruments have such assistance mechanisms, that Convention has shown the true value of such an arrangement. Although the job is not yet done, survivors have received significant support and the numbers of new victims have been reduced, millions of square meters of land have been cleared, stocks of mines have been destroyed and technical support has been provided – a lot of that being executed through the Convention’s assistance mechanism, and much might not have occurred without that mechanism. The assistance mechanism in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Amended Protocol II has largely not been required, partly because of the other Convention’s success and, partly because most states that provide assistance and are outside the Ottawa Convention, have chosen to use bi-lateral mechanisms. And of course Protocol V has just entered into force and it’s assistance mechanism has not yet been used.



The Convention as a Cooperation and Assistance Tool

Article 6: International cooperation and assistance

5

Within the Ottawa Convention, Article six is a very wide ranging article that gives States Parties the right to ask for and receive assistance. It obliges other States Parties in a position to do so, to provide that assistance in all of the areas of mine action. It also obliges States Parties to participate in the exchange of equipment, material and scientific and technological information concerning the implementation of this Convention.

The States Parties in a position to provide assistance can deliver that assistance through the United Nations system, international, regional or national organizations or institutions, the International Committee of the Red Cross, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and their International Federation, non-governmental organizations, or on a bilateral basis.

In order to develop a coherent and complete mine action program States Parties requiring assistance may request the United Nations, regional organizations, other States Parties or other competent intergovernmental or non-governmental fora to assist its authorities to determine the extent and scope of the anti-personnel mine problem; the financial, technological and human resources that are required for the implementation of the program; the estimated number of years necessary to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under the jurisdiction or control of the concerned State Party; mine awareness activities to reduce the incidence of mine-related injuries or deaths; and the best methodologies to deliver assistance to mine victims.



The Convention as a Cooperation and Assistance Tool

The informal mechanism

6

In addition to the formal structure established by the Convention, meetings of states parties, review conferences, articles on assistance, transparency and compliance there is, what I choose to call, “an informal mechanism” that, in my view, functions as the primary tool to implement the assistance article of this Convention. That tool consists of many parts. Some of which include:



The Convention as a Cooperation and Assistance Tool

The informal mechanism

The Intersessional Work Programme
Sponsorship Programme
The ISU
The GICHD
UN Mine Action Team
Landmine Monitor
Regional Organizations
MASG

7

The Intersessional Work Programme which permits States Parties to meet with all interested actors, to discuss needs, gain technical knowledge and arrange for assistance.

And of course the formal and informal meetings are supported by a sponsorship program designed to ensure the full participation of all mine affected States Parties and selected States not party.

We have the Implementation Support Unit that provides States Parties a whole range of services related to all of areas of mine action and in reality is the first place States Parties should turn to for information, advice and assistance.

We have the Geneva Centre itself which, again in my view, is the center of excellence in mine action and a great source of information and assistance.

We have the UN Mine Action Team, UN programmes in most mine affected states and another informal meeting that is key to effective assistance – the annual Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and UN Advisors.

We have an informal monitoring mechanism – Landmine Monitor which often identifies needs.

There are regional organizations such as the Organization of American States, the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance and others who play an important regional role in coordinating and delivering assistance.

In terms of donor coordination there is the Mine Action Support Group consisting of donors, both members and non-members, of the Convention. The MASG is currently being led by the US and as we all know is also here this week.



The Ottawa Convention and Mine Action in general have played a very important role throughout the world as a confidence building measure. Let's look first at the Convention as a transparency tool. Article 7 of the Convention obliges all States Parties to make an annual report. Part of that report must include the number of mines held, the number to be retained for the purpose permitted by the Convention, and detailed information on mined areas. In many States Parties this last bit of information also relates to minefields in border areas. Once the information is received it is posted on the United Nations website. Simply providing this sort of detailed information and making it available to the public as an open source document can only help build confidence and relieve regional concerns.

In the Intersessional Work Programme process all States Parties and many non States Parties regularly meet informally as a group and in a multitude of side meetings to exchange views in the areas of the general status of the Convention including advocacy, victim assistance, mine risk education, mine clearance, technology exchange and stockpile destruction. This process coupled with regular formal meetings of States Parties has done much to improve communication between states – a process that can only develop confidence between neighbouring states including both member and non member states. Canada is pleased this year to be one of the Co-Rapporteurs of the Standing Committee on mine clearance and will actively use its position to further enhance the Intersessional process as a tool that builds confidence and advances regional security.

The Ottawa Convention, as both a humanitarian and a disarmament convention has played an important part in improving regional security and building confidence.



The Convention as a Confidence Building Measure

*The Ottawa Convention has an
impact on People*

9

And of course there is another facet to confidence building. What I have talked about to this point has been confidence building primarily between neighbouring states. This Convention has added another element to the theme of confidence building and that is that it helps to support the relationship between a government and its citizens. Mines or even just the threat of mines can completely destroy the economic livelihood of a whole community. Once the people see the practical impact of the Ottawa Convention, that of clearing all of the mines and assisting the victims, they see that their government is concerned about their safety, their economic livelihood, their health and their well being.



Organization of American States Office of Humanitarian Mine Action

Mine Action in the Americas: A Regional Approach



A few words now on one regional example of how the mine problem is being addressed in Central and South America.

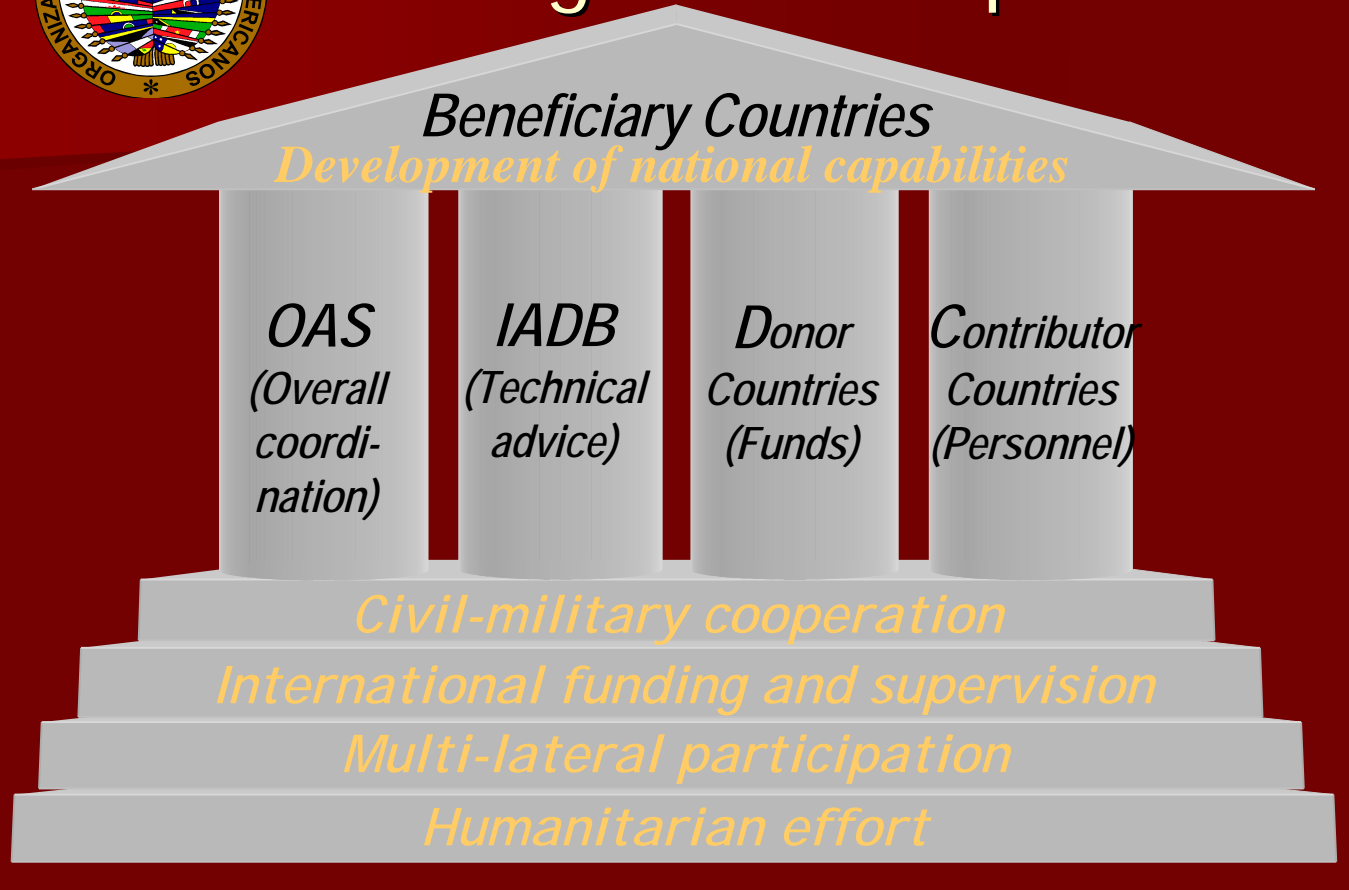
For more than 15 years, the nations of the Americas have taken a regional approach to mine action, a process that has been led and coordinated by the Organization of American States.

The OAS is the world's oldest regional organization, which grew out of a history of regional cooperation dating back to the 19th century. Today, some 34 countries of the Americas actively participate in the Organization, and many of these play a direct role in the OAS Mine Action Program.

The Program was created by the OAS Secretary General in 1991, in response to requests by the Central American countries affected by antipersonnel landmines. Since 1992, the OAS General Assembly has annually passed a series of resolutions which provide the mandate for the OAS Mine Action Program of the General Secretariat to assist mine-affected countries in the Americas in fulfilling their commitment to eliminate the effects of antipersonnel landmines from the Western Hemisphere. Over the years, the Program has expanded in size and scope, extending its support to nine of its member states.



Program Concept



The essential character of the Program is humanitarian, with its basis being the effort to eliminate antipersonnel mines as a threat to the security and lives of people living in mine-affected countries. The Program is also characterized by its high degree of multilateral participation, including efforts by both national and international participants. Another important facet of its multilateral nature is the financial and personnel support provided by the international community. Not only is participation multilateral, but it is also marked by a high degree of civil-military cooperation at all levels of the program, from the local to the international level.

In each national mine action program supported by the OAS, there are five different participants:

- The OAS itself which, through the Office of Humanitarian Mine Action of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, is responsible for the overall coordination of program support, for fundraising within the international community and for the transparent administration of funds received to support national programs from international donors.
- The Inter-American Defense Board, or IADB, is the military advisor body of the OAS that provides international monitors and technical experts who provide humanitarian demining training, technical advice and monitoring of field operations.
- Several donor countries provide the financial resources that are needed to support mine action activities in the participating mine-affected OAS member states.
- In addition, a group of OAS member countries also contribute military personnel, at no additional cost to the Program, through the IADB.
- And, finally, the supported member states themselves provide deminers, as well as equipment, logistic support, medical and evacuation services within their national capabilities to facilitate operation of their national programs.

An underlying goal in the structure of the Program is the development of national capabilities to enable the supported countries to sustain all aspects of their national mine action efforts as their particular situation requires.



Components

*Stockpile
Destruction*

*Mine Risk
Education*

*Humanitarian
Demining*

*Victim
Assistance*

Advocacy

***Comprehensive
Mine Action***

12

The OAS Mine Action Program integrates support for all aspects of mine action:

- The centerpiece of this effort continues to be support for humanitarian demining operations. However, closely integrated with the mine clearance effort are
- Mine-risk education campaigns aimed at reducing the number of accidents by promoting safe behavior among inhabitants of mine-affected communities. Campaigns are closely coordinated with demining operations and are carried out largely through community visits by specially trained OAS and national staff, a variety of national radio messages, and school programs. The programs emphasize involvement by affected communities in mine awareness initiatives and benefit from their participation through information received about the location of mined areas and explosive devices.
- OAS-supported victim assistance programs provide landmine survivors who have no social security or military benefits with transportation from their communities to the rehabilitation center, lodging, meals, prostheses, therapy, and medications. In collaboration with the national training institutions, the OAS has also supported vocational training and micro-enterprise financing for over 200 landmine victims in Nicaragua, with a similar project now underway in Colombia.
- One of the OAS Program's most important achievements has been accomplished through technical and financial support to member states for the destruction of their antipersonnel mine stockpiles. Although this effort was largely completed in 2004, the Program is also studying requests from Member States to extend this support to the destruction of excess or expired stocks of ammunition.
- The OAS also serves as a facilitator for its member states in coordinating positions on mine action issues and by assisting Member States with the preparation of reporting requirements under the Ottawa Convention.

Program Scope



As previously mentioned, the OAS has more than 15 years of experience in the field of mine action. With the first demining operations supported by the OAS beginning in Nicaragua in 1993, the Program has assisted ten member states in various elements of mine action. Of these, four member states -- Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Suriname -- have been able to declare their nations as free of the impact of landmines. With OAS support, more than a million stockpiled antipersonnel mines have been destroyed and hundreds of thousands of mines have been cleared from the Americas. In addition, hundreds of landmines survivors have received physical and psychological rehabilitation services, as well as assistance with socio-economic reintegration into their communities, with the support of international donor funds provided through the OAS.



Participating Countries

Donors

Australia
Brazil
Canada
Denmark
European Union
France
Germany
Italy
Japan
Norway
Netherlands
Russian Federation
South Korea
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States

Beneficiaries

Nicaragua
Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Chile

Complete

Costa Rica
Guatemala
Honduras
Suriname

Contributors

Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Nicaragua
United States
Venezuela

14

In addition to the OAS member states benefiting from the Program, it is important to recognize the significant level of support provided by the international community, both the donor states shown here, and the OAS members contributing military personnel to provide technical support to the Program. It is also important to note that several of the countries that have been assisted through the OAS Program have, in turn, provided experience technical personnel to assist other member states with their mine action efforts. These include, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Military Participation

International / Regional

IADB Staff

- Technical advice
- Planning assistance



Contributing IADB Member States

- Military technical experts & trainers



Sub-Regional

Command & Control



Central America



Colombia



Peru-Ecuador

International Teams

- Training
- Monitoring
- Quality control
- Certification

National

Beneficiary Countries

- National planning
- Demining troops
- Logistics support
- Communications
- Medical support / evacuation

15

The role of the Inter-American Defense Board in coordination of technical support for humanitarian demining operations is a key element of the Program. The IADB coordinates personnel requirements with OAS member states and provides command and control of them through three in-country missions covering Central America, Colombia and Peru-Ecuador. These groups provide training to national deminers, monitor operations and ensure quality control operations and certification of completed work. They work closely with national military authorities to ensure that support requirements are satisfied and that compliance with International Mine Action Standards is maintained in all mine clearance activities.

In summary then, the OAS mine action programme is a comprehensive, regional programme to address all aspects of mine action that draws on the strengths and capabilities of its members to make thi sregion truly free from the threat of mines.



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16

In conclusion Mr Chair, I would like to reiterate the importance Canada and 152 other countries, almost 80% of the world, place on this Convention - which we see as the definitive treaty on anti-personnel mines. This is a particularly vicious weapon that has a significant impact on the innocent.

The Ottawa Convention is working – it does increase confidence particularly between neighbouring states. It provides the systems and mechanisms to seek and secure help to address the problems created by anti-personnel mines. It gives us just what we need to finish the job.

What we need do now is re-energise ourselves, roll up our sleeves and get this job done.