

**Meeting of Standing Committees of the States Parties
to the Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production
and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction
Geneva, 23-27 April, 2007**

Statement by H.E. Zdzisław RAPACKI
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of the States Parties of the Ottawa Convention

Let me first join previous speakers in expressing our sincere appreciations and extending our wholehearted congratulations for the Australian Presidency and the Government of Switzerland for such an excellent organization of this meeting.

Since this year marks 10th anniversary of launching negotiations and 8th anniversary of entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, I would like to emphasize its profound importance in global endeavors aimed at diminishing human suffering being a consequence of the use of anti-personnel mines. The role of the Treaty reaches far beyond mere addressing the problem of the use of APM's. It has opened a new chapter in dealing with the question of arms control and disarmament.

Poland's position with respect to the Convention, presented already many times in the past, remains unchanged. We endorse the ideals upon which the Ottawa process has been anchored and thus signed the Mine Ban Treaty as early as December 1997. We are fully committed to the Mine Ban Treaty and are taking every possible effort to ratify it at the soonest possible date.

Poland has taken tangible steps in order to overcome the existing constraints and meet fully standards and requirements set by the Ottawa Convention. We have launched a stringent, decade long, plan aimed at gradual but systematic reduction of the stocks of APM's. Within its framework we intend to eliminate and withdraw over 100 thousand APM's annually and thus ensure total destruction of mines prohibited by the Convention within this period. Furthermore we have given some consideration to the possible ways of intensifying this process. All these efforts should allow eventually for the ratification by Poland of the Mine Ban Treaty.

It is also worth reiterating that Poland – even though not a state-party to the Convention - has partially implemented the Mine Ban Treaty. We do not produce, export or use anti-personnel mines in the military operations. Neither do we have any mined areas on the territory of Poland. Since 2003, we have been voluntarily submitting to the United Nations Secretary General national reports elaborated under art. 7 of the Mine Ban Treaty. Last year we received a visit of the Special Representative on Mine Action.

Poland has been actively participating in international efforts of alleviating the humanitarian problems caused by irresponsible use of landmines. We have contributed as much as possible to this process by providing experts, engineering personnel, deminers and offering some financial support – mainly to the various peacekeeping and stabilizing missions abroad, such as Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Iraq. The fact that Poland assigned over 5 million euro for this goal in the years 2001 – 2005 should be a sound evidence of our strong commitment to resolving the problem of APM's.

We believe that the decade-long success of the Mine Ban Treaty ~~should not be measured only in terms of the number of States Parties. Its merit~~ lies primarily in its role as a general framework for actions undertaken with a purpose to diminish and ultimately prohibit the use of APM's. The Convention serves also as a catalogue of guiding principles in the process of demining and providing survivor assistance. Full compliance with the Ottawa Convention seems a determining factor for its effectiveness and success and therefore should be perceived as an uphill task today. Poland remains strongly committed to this goal.

Thank you for your attention.