

June 13, 2005

Organization of American States (OAS) intervention on “States Parties in the process of fulfilling obligations under Article #5 of the Convention (Surinam)

The Organization of American States is pleased to respond to an opportunity to comment on the process of fulfilling Article #5 obligations based on the outcomes of successful mine clearance regional cooperation since the Nairobi Meeting.

We would reiterate that the OAS is not a States Party and does not pretend to speak on behalf of the Government of Surinam.

The details of the recently concluded regional cooperation will be provided in the context of the Tuesday morning meeting of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies as an update from those in a position to do so regarding cooperation and assistance.

Notwithstanding these considerations and disclaimers, we feel it important to share and highlight Surinam as a success story and a State Party we consider to be postured to declare itself in compliance with Article #5 of the Convention.

Surinam had declared itself as mine affected primarily based on a single minefield measuring some 50 meters by 75 meters, containing a limited number of PRB 409 antipersonnel mines and with civilian homes located at a distance of less than 5 meters from the minefield. This minefield had not been cleared during demining operations related to the national peace process undertaken during the early 1990's.

The OAS is pleased to report that on April 4, 2005, at the conclusion of training, clearance operations and quality control activities, the demined area was turned over to the Interdepartmental Commission of Antipersonnel Mines of the Republic of Surinam.

It is our view that the mine clearance was conducted using appropriate technologies and methodologies and in accordance with accepted International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) such that the results conform to the requirements of Article #5 of the Convention.

We have likewise recommended to the Government of Surinam that they use a declaration format similar to those employed by Costa Rica and Honduras (and under consideration by Guatemala) to communicate compliance with the Convention. That format would declare that all known or suspected mined areas and minefields had been cleared; that the National Plan/Program had been successfully concluded; that a residual national capacity was in place to respond to any unforeseen circumstance related to mine clearance. As a supporting measure, the OAS and its technical partner the Inter American Defense Board (IADB) along with other regional partners who collaborated in the Surinam mine clearance effort (Honduras, Brazil, Canada and the United States) remain poised to provide any needed follow up action which may be requested.