

International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Presentation on Wednesday, 15 June 2005

Standing Committee: Stockpile Destruction

Agenda Item: An overview of the status of stockpile destruction

Speaker: Steve Goose (Human Rights Watch), Head of ICBL Delegation

[Note: These remarks accompanied a power point presentation]

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague at Human Rights Watch, Mark Hiznay, for his role in preparing this presentation. I also want to thank the co-chairs of this Standing Committee for their diligence in encouraging and assisting other States Parties to destroy their antipersonnel mine stockpiles in a timely fashion.

Stockpile destruction is clearly one of the most important obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty. The ICBL looks at stockpile destruction as “preventative mine action.” A mine destroyed from stocks never goes into the ground and never takes a civilian victim. And it costs a lot less to destroy stockpiled mines than to detect and clear emplaced mines. With few exceptions, it has been shown that there are no overwhelming technical or financial constraints to meeting the obligation.

Stockpile destruction has been one of the most successful areas of implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty. Currently all states who have reached their four-year deadline have completed destruction. Only two States Parties were late (Guinea and Turkmenistan).

I should note that all of the photos in this presentation are from the recent stockpile destruction in Algeria.

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- A total of 69 States Parties have completed stockpile destruction.
- Another 57 States Parties have officially declared not having stocks.
- Thirteen States Parties are in the process of destroying stocks; of those, six have not yet begun actual destruction, but are in the inventory and planning stages; this also includes Cameroon whose status is uncertain and I'll return to Cameroon later.
- Five States Parties, those who have not submitted Article 7 transparency reports, still need to officially declare their stockpile status; of the five, Guyana and Ethiopia are believed to have AP mine stocks.
- Thus, we believe that today a total of 129 States Parties do not have stockpiles and 15 do still have stocks.

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In looking at the major progress so far, States Parties have destroyed over 38.3 million antipersonnel mines from stockpiles. Destruction was completed most recently in Bangladesh (February 2005), Mauritania (December 2004), Uruguay (December 2004), Colombia (October 2004), Zambia (October 2004), and Tanzania (July 2004). All of these countries met their deadline.

States Parties have about 10 million more stockpiled mines to destroy, with the most being held by Belarus (4.5 million), Turkey (3 million), Serbia and Montenegro (1.32 million), and Greece (1.25 million).

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Here is a list of the upcoming destruction deadlines. Of the fifteen declared or thought to have stocks, one has a deadline in 2005 (Guinea-Bissau on 1 November), two in 2006 (Algeria on 1 April and DR Congo on 1 November), four in 2007, seven in 2008 and one in 2009.

It is very important to emphasize that the treaty obligation is to destroy stockpiled antipersonnel mines “as soon as possible,” but not later than four years after entry into force. Many States Parties have taken the “as soon as possible” obligation to heart. A total of 22 States Parties completed destruction more than two years before their deadline, and another six finished more than one year in advance of their deadline.

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There are a number of lingering concerns that need to be addressed.

- First is the case of Equatorial Guinea. It has never submitted an Article 7 report (which was initially due in August 1999), and thus never officially declared if it has a stock of AP mines. Its four year deadline was 1 March 2003. We don't believe Equatorial Guinea has ever possessed AP mines; that is what an official told Landmine Monitor informally. But it needs to officially inform States Parties.
- Second are the cases of Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, and Guyana. They too are late submitting initial Article 7 reports and formally declaring stockpile status. Their destruction deadlines are November 2005, September 2007 and February 2008, respectively. Only Guyana is believed to have a stockpile.
- Finally is the case of Cameroon. Cameroon submitted a voluntary Article 7 report in March 2001 before it became a State Party; that report declared a stock of 500 AP mines for training purposes only. However, Landmine Monitor received a report from the Cameroon military, dated May 2003, which states that a total of 9,183 antipersonnel mines had been destroyed on 17 April 2003. This destruction has never been reported to States Parties; it is not clear if this constitutes completion of stock destruction or if additional stocks remain. Cameroon has not submitted its official initial Article 7 report due on 27 August 2003. Its four-year deadline for stock destruction is 1 March 2007.

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Several other issues deserve to be highlighted.

- First is the matter of stockpiles discovered after completion of the destruction program. This has already occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad and Croatia. It is essential that there be full transparency about newly discovered mines, and that they be destroyed as soon as possible. Action Point 15 from the Nairobi Action Plan states: “When previously unknown stockpiles are discovered after stockpile destruction deadlines have passed, report such discoveries in accordance with their obligations under Article 7, take advantage of other informal means to share such information and destroy these mines as a matter of urgent priority.”

The ICBL suggests that discoveries should be reported immediately to the Implementation Support Unit and Stockpile Destruction Standing Committee co-chairs, and that destruction should occur within one year at most. The example of Cambodia shows the importance of this, as it has variously reported discovering 15,567 mines, 38,812 mines, and 75,544 mines in the period from 2000 to 2003.

- Second is the matter of potentially problematic mines in terms of destruction. The Standing Committee has previously noted the difficulties for PFM mines. Belarus has some 4 million of these mines and Ukraine, a signatory expected to ratify soon, has nearly 6 million.

A new problem may be ADAM mines held by Greece and Turkey. These are artillery-delivered mines that contain a trace of depleted uranium for structural purposes. The United States need permission from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission when it destroys these mines and has developed a special procedure called cryofracture. Greece has declared 504 ADAM projectiles containing 18,144 individual antipersonnel mines. Turkey has not yet declared its ADAM holdings, but US government data indicates some 34,000 ADAM mines were exported to Turkey.

- Finally, for the sake of consistency and clarity, we ask that States Parties stop reporting mines retained for training and research purposes under Form B of Article 7 reports, which is for stockpiled mines, and only report retained mines under Form D, as intended.

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The ICBL would like to introduce another issue of concern that has not been discussed by States Parties in any serious fashion, and that is Multipurpose Firing Devices, primarily tripwires and pressure release devices, such as the US M142, the Soviet MUV-1, and the Yugoslav EMU-1. There are many of these multipurpose firing devices still in the ammunition supply systems of States Parties, particularly NATO and former Warsaw Pact states. They are designed to be used with many types of mines and munitions. They can be used for a number of purposes, including as a secondary fuze for mines, as antihandling devices, and perhaps most notably, for booby-trap applications. Explosive booby-traps (those that explode from the presence, proximity or contact of a person) are prohibited by the Mine Ban Treaty. Thus, there are concerns about the legality of at least some uses of multipurpose firing devices under the treaty. Some States Parties have destroyed unspecified types of firing devices and fuzes along with their antipersonnel mine stocks. This is an area where more transparency and technical understanding is needed.

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The co-chairs have already done a good job of laying out some key challenges and goals for the future. Many of the 15 States with stocks should be able to complete destruction in the near future. We too challenge these states to complete stockpile destruction before the 6th Meeting of States Parties in November: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cyprus, Guinea-Bissau, and Guyana. We don't know the size of Ethiopia's stock or how time consuming the job will be. It appears that the DR Congo and Sudan need some assistance in locating and doing an inventory of their stockpiles. Stockpile destruction will take a longer period of time for Afghanistan, Belarus, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey.

I will close by noting the importance of full transparency at destruction events, and not just the final event. Civil society, media, diplomats, and other observers should be present. This is obviously not so important as a formal verification measure, but it builds confidence and promotes the achievement. All who carry out and complete stockpile destruction deserve international attention and congratulations. Let's promote the success of this treaty in saving lives and limbs! Thank you.
