



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

PRESIDENT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES

General Status and Operation of the Convention
12 May 2003

Introduction:

As I stated in 4MSP's President's Action Programme, while together we have achieved a great deal, between now and the Convention's first Review Conference in 2004 additional efforts will be required to ensure that the Convention lives up to its humanitarian promise. A great deal has been achieved in the context of the President's Action Programme since we last gathered in February. It is my pleasure to provide you with a brief update of what has been achieved and what challenges remain.

Focusing on our core humanitarian objectives:

A. Clearing mined land:

37 States Parties have declared in their Article 7 reports that they are affected by the impact of landmines. An additional 8 States Parties, which have not yet submitted their reports, might also be mine-affected. On Wednesday, the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies will concentrate on the 4P Approach (**Problems, Plans, Progress and Priorities**) with a view to ensuring that the 10-year period to clear mines will be well used.

B. Destroying stockpiled mines:

The 1st of March 2003 marked both four years since the Convention entered into force and the date when 45 States Parties were required to comply with the Convention's first deadline for stockpile destruction. The compliance rate is impressive, as all State Parties with a March 1, 2003 deadline have indicated that they no longer possess stockpiles.

The States Parties that either have eliminated anti-personnel mines from their arsenals or will soon complete their destruction programmes have destroyed together more than 30 million landmines. What is important is that even States Parties with few resources took full ownership over this obligation. Another element is that some States Parties have destroyed huge numbers of mines e.g., Italy – over 7 million mines. Those States that have destroyed mines, have demonstrated that their armed forces can live without these weapons.

The Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction will give the opportunity to those States Parties, which have not yet destroyed their stockpile, to update us on the status of their national programmes of destruction. In this relation, I would like to remind that the understanding of Oslo negotiators was that the numbers of retained anti-personnel mines should be the “minimum number absolutely necessary and should be calculated in hundreds or thousands, and not in tens of thousands”.

C. Assisting victims:

The responsibility to provide for the care and rehabilitation of landmine survivors rests with each affected State Party. Approximately 40 of these States Parties may need assistance in meeting the needs of survivors in their countries. The Standing Committee on Victim Assistance serves as a forum to discuss how the role of the affected country can be effectively provided with assistance. However, for the Standing Committee to be well used for this purpose, it is essential that the States Parties who hold ultimate responsibility share, to the best of their abilities, their problems, plans, progress and priorities for assistance. 12 States Parties provided updates on some of these matters in February and I hope more do so during the Standing Committee meeting tomorrow.

D. Universalizing the Convention:

Since our meeting in February, two more States have joined the Convention: Sao Tome and Principe (R) on 31/03/03 and Timor-Leste (A) on 07/05/03. 133 States have now accepted the Convention, that is 69 % of the world's States, with the highest rate of adherence per continent in the Americas (89 %), Africa (87 %), and Europe (80 %). Additionally, 14 signatory States are expected to ratify the Convention in a foreseeable future. 47 States still have to accede to the Convention.

On 12 March 2003 the Turkish Parliament approved the Convention. In their Joint Statement of 3 May 2003, the Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers declared that in line with their agreement of 6 April 2001, the appropriate procedures were completed in Turkey as well as in Greece. The two countries will now proceed to submit simultaneously their respective instruments to the UN Secretary General. On 25 March 2003, the Lithuanian Parliament ratified the Convention.

Taking action to achieve our objectives:

A. Exchanging Information:

Since February 2003, five more States Parties have presented their initial Article 7 Reports (Algeria, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Seychelles and Togo) bringing it to 111 the number of States having complied with duties under Article 7, paragraph 1, to provide such an initial report. 16 States are still late and encouraged to comply as soon as feasible.

We must remember that Article 7, a valuable source of information to both support cooperation and assess progress, is an annual reporting obligation. The deadline for annual reports covering the last calendar year has just past – on 30 April – and on Friday, in my capacity as Coordinator of the Article 7 Contact Group, I will provide an update on the extent to which reports have been submitted to the United Nations.

It is worth recalling that on 12 March 2003, Poland, a Signatory State, voluntarily submitted an Article 7 report and that Latvia, which has not acceded to the Convention, did the same on 9 May 2003. Other European States, not yet members of the Convention, have also expressed an interest for this transparency measure.

B. Mobilising resources:

The Contact Group on Resource Mobilization will be focusing this afternoon on this item, to ensure that a significant renewal of our collective commitment is made to finish the job of eliminating anti-personnel mines. In February, the role of both mine affected and other States

Parties was highlighted. I look forward this week to substantive discussions on the role of another set of actors – multilateral institutions.

C. Regional approaches:

In my President's Action Programme, I wrote that "with certain regions or sub-regions deserving greater attention, all actors should be encouraged to undertake regional initiatives related to implementation. In this regard, a considerable amount of activity has occurred since February:

- In February, the States Parties from Southern Africa agreed to gather as in informal SADC Contact Group, to promote the achievement of various implementation targets in time for the Review Conference. I understand that Angola, in its capacity as Chair of the SADC Mine Action Committee, has requested or will request South Africa to host a regional workshop on these matters in the lead-up to the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties.
- Also in Africa, last week the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo held a workshop to assess progress and challenges in implementing the Convention in their respective countries.
- In South East Asia – as a product of the discussions of the informal Bangkok Regional Action Group – a regional seminar, *Building a Cooperative Future for Mine Action in South-East Asia*, was held in Phnom Penh, 26-28 March 2003. The purpose of the seminar was to further enhance mine action cooperation and coordination in South East Asia amongst governments, operators and donors.
- I know that initiatives in other regions likely will be discussed this week and I look forward to hearing updates about these efforts at the various Standing Committee meetings.

D. Actions to promote the universal acceptance of the Convention:

With respect to universalization, in my President's Action Program I wrote that States Parties – individually and collectively, the Universalization Contact Group, the President and interested organizations should play an active role in promoting the Convention. In this regard, I was especially pleased that in the Declaration of 25 February 2003 of the XIII Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Kuala Lumpur, the Heads of State or Government of States Parties to the Mine-Ban Convention invited those States that have not yet done so to consider becoming parties to the Convention. I thanked the Prime Minister of Malaysia on his efforts to achieve such a substantial political commitment on the part of the Non-Aligned Movement's leaders.

On 1 March 2003, the First Lady of Poland gave her support to the humanitarian aims of the Convention during the opening ceremony of an exhibition organized by the Polish Red Cross in Warsaw, called "Landmines – Deadly Legacy". In Istanbul, on 26 April 2003, at the end of a Conference called Antipersonnel Landmines in Turkey and Worldwide organised by The Campaign for a Turkey Without Mines, the participants urged the Turkish and Greek governments to jointly deposit their respective accession and ratification instruments with the United Nations Secretary General as soon as possible and before the Fifth Meeting of States Parties.

E. Cooperation to promote further clarity:

In March, I said at the CD that I was confident that despite the troubled times the world was seeing, the States Parties to the Convention would respect their obligations, and especially those contained in Article 1.

This Convention is a true success story regarding how States have accepted an important responsibilities to never use anti-personnel mines and to cooperate to address the devastating impact of those mines already used. It is heartening to again see that approximately 500 delegates have registered to participate in this forum for cooperation. I look forward to fruitful deliberations this week.