

ICBL Intervention on Stockpile Destruction
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We would like to begin by congratulating the Stockpile Destruction Standing Committee co-chairs for their good work during the past year, and for the excellent overview they provided yesterday about the progress made in stockpile destruction, and perhaps more importantly, about the challenges that still remain.

We would also like to congratulate Latvia on its announcement that it has completed the destruction of its antipersonnel mine stockpile. It is the 75th State Party to do so, and only 12 still have stocks to destroy. All together, States Parties have destroyed nearly 40 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines.

Today we will elaborate on some of the ICBL's concerns regarding stockpile destruction, many of them echoing the challenges identified by the co-chairs.

States Parties should recognize that it will take considerable effort to maintain the stellar record of compliance thus far with the Article 4 requirement to destroy stockpiled mines within four years. For a variety of reasons, a number of countries with deadlines in 2007 and early 2008 may have trouble meeting their obligation. These include Angola, Guyana, Belarus, Burundi and Sudan.

Angola, with a deadline in January 2007, has twice in the past said it may have to ask for an extension of the deadline—even though the treaty does not provide for such extensions with respect to the stockpile deadline (only for the mine clearance deadline). We were pleased to hear Angola's intervention yesterday that it is in fact planning to meet the deadline.

Guyana, with a deadline in February 2008, has never officially acknowledged if it has a stockpile of antipersonnel mines. Guyana has never submitted its initial Article 7 transparency report (due July 2004) or otherwise communicated its stockpile status to other States Parties. Landmine Monitor estimates that Guyana has a stockpile of 20,000 antipersonnel mines. There have been no indications of any planning for destruction thus far.

Belarus, with a deadline in March 2008, has described the difficulties it faces in destroying 3.3 million PFM-type mines. Burundi and Sudan, with deadlines in April 2008, are having trouble locating and identifying all of the antipersonnel mine stocks dispersed throughout those two war-plagued countries and held by various actors.

While ultimate responsibility lies with these states themselves, other States Parties should pay particular attention to the situation for each of these, and do all they can to encourage and assist them to meet their stockpile destruction deadlines.

We were pleased to hear the representative of the Democratic Republic of Congo reiterate earlier today that the DRC has completed destruction of all known stockpiles of antipersonnel mines under its control, ahead of its deadline of 1 November 2006, and that it is committed to destroying in a timely fashion any additional stocks that are identified in the future. But the ICBL has concerns about the manner in which the destruction program has been carried out and the way in which completion has been determined and reported to States Parties.

When the DRC first indicated at the May intersessional meeting that it had met its deadline, it provided few details. It did not indicate when it had finished destruction, did not provide details on numbers and types of mines destroyed, did not indicate how the mines were destroyed. There was not the level of transparency that has been routine in the stockpile destruction programs of most other States Parties, including involvement of foreign military and diplomatic observers, civil society and the media. The DRC had not reported any progress in its stockpile destruction program prior to the May meeting, and it is not clear that a thorough inventory was carried out.

The ICBL fully appreciates the very difficult circumstances in the DRC, and does not question the DRC's commitment to fulfilling all of its Mine Ban Treaty obligations, but it is important that all States Parties recognize the need for stockpile destruction programs that are as comprehensive and transparent as possible.

Another issue of concern relates to antipersonnel mines that are discovered, seized, or turned in after stockpile destruction has been declared completed in a country. According to Landmine Monitor, government forces discovered or seized antipersonnel mines in eight States Parties from mid-2005 to mid-2006, but only the DR Congo officially reported that fact. The others were Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, El Salvador, Philippines, Turkey and Uganda.

Action #15 of 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."

States Parties are largely failing to report these finds or any resulting actions. When States Parties fail to report, there is no information on whether or not the mines were placed in a stockpile, retained for training purposes, or destroyed. It is a State Party's legal responsibility to account for the disposition of captured, seized, or turned-in antipersonnel mines. This should at a minimum be reported in annual Article 7 reports. The ICBL has suggested that it would be beneficial to amend Article 7's Form G to include a category specifically for this purpose. The ICBL has also suggested that States Parties should, in addition to Article 7 reporting, immediately inform the Implementation

Support Unit and/or Standing Committee co-chairs of newly found antipersonnel mines and their disposition.

Another stockpile related issue is that of Claymore and OZM-72 antipersonnel mines. Both of these types of mines can typically be used in either command-detonated mode or victim-activated mode (the latter with a tripwire). Use in victim-activated mode is prohibited by the Mine Ban Treaty. Following numerous discussions on this issue in earlier years, Standing Committee co-chairs have urged States Parties to take steps to ensure that the means for victim activation are permanently removed, and that armed forces are instructed as to their legal obligations regarding these types of mines. They have also urged that such steps be included in Article 7 reporting.

Earlier this week, Bosnia and Herzegovina provided the best example of how to deal with these mines: it announced that it would destroy all of the more than 15,000 MRUD (Claymore-type) mines it has found in stockpiles. It said it was doing this as a humanitarian measure, since such mines could be used as antipersonnel mines. Similarly, Moldova has announced that it has destroyed all of the MON (Claymore-type) and OZM-72 mines it had been retaining for training purposes.

Finally, we would like to point to a different kind of stockpile concern: those held by states not party to the Mine Ban Treaty. Landmine Monitor identifies 37 non-States Parties, including two signatories, that have stockpiles of antipersonnel mines. Together, they hold more than 160 million antipersonnel mines in their arsenals. Most of those belong to a single country, China, with an estimated 110 million. Others include Russia with 26.5 million, the United States with 10.4 million, Pakistan with an estimated 6 million, and India with an estimated 4 to 5 million. Signatory Poland has almost 1 million. This year, South Korea informed Landmine Monitor that it stocked 407,800 antipersonnel mines, whereas officials previously indicated about 2 million. These huge numbers reinforce the importance of universalizing the Mine Ban Treaty and firmly establishing a new international norm against the weapon, so that these millions of mines will never be used.

Thank you.