

Human Rights Watch Statement to the Seventh Meeting of the Intersessional Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty

Delivered by Mark Hiznay

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Antivehicle Mines with Sensitive Fuzes and Antihandling Devices

Thank you for allowing Human Rights Watch to make this intervention. Alleviating the human suffering resulting from mine use is a goal shared by all here. Antivehicle mines (AVM) are a significant component of the mine problem and we believe that work on this issue is necessary in all forums addressing the impact of mines. Since the beginning of 2001, casualties among civilians and peacekeepers were caused by AVM in at least 21 countries. Individual non-combatants and unarmored wheeled vehicles carrying civilians, deminers, peacekeepers, and humanitarian supplies are particularly at risk. Finally and most disturbingly, there is fresh evidence of recent AVM transfers to zones of conflict.

Human Rights Watch believes that an AVM, regardless of design intent or label, with a fuze or antihandling device capable of being activated by the unintentional act of a person meets the definition of an antipersonnel mine and is prohibited by the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. The way that States Parties come to a common understanding of article 2 will have a significant impact on how this treaty is implemented and universalized.

We look forward to working with all states that share the goal of extending protections to non-combatants and stemming the proliferation and use of AVM with sensitive fuzes and antihandling devices. We commend states that have already taken positive steps at the national level and urge all states to review their national inventories and enact best practices. Many areas of common practice already exist and these could be extended internationally while balancing humanitarian and military equities.

We seek practical solutions to the existing problems caused by the transfer and use of hand-emplaced (non remotely delivered) AVM. Some recommended steps are included in a non-paper available from us. The upcoming CCW discussions on mines other than antipersonnel mines are an excellent opportunity to make progress on this issue. Concrete progress in those discussions will likely influence our work here through 2004.

Thank You.