

STATUS OF UKRAINE PFM PROJECT

Mr Co-Chairs, Ladies and Gentlemen

My aim today is to very quickly provide an update on the status of PFM mine destruction in Ukraine.

Before I get in to the current status of this project I would like to give you a bit of background.

The PFM or butterfly mine is a technically challenging mine to destroy. Its liquid explosive gives off toxic gases when it is exploded. It is probably deteriorating in storage (the explosive is corrosive and in some cases may be leaking into the fuse assembly). It cannot be removed from its container without arming it. Once armed it cannot be disarmed. And it has a number of systems of delivery. Some of these delivery systems may increase the technical challenge.

There are an estimated 100 million of these mines around the world and they are all at the end of or nearly at the end of their safe life. In so far as which nations are holding these mines we know that Ukraine has some 5.6 million, Belarus has some 3.6 million and there is an unknown quantity in Russia suspected of being in the area of 70 million. Other nations may also be holding them.

Because it is a challenging mine to destroy, the Geneva Centre completed a study aimed at attempting to quantify the dangers. The conclusions of that study determined that the risks of explosive degradation were genuine and that these risks could not be quantified without a second study with live explosive tests. The first study is posted on the Geneva Centre web site.

At this time the Geneva Centre went out to private industry asking the basic question “can you carry out this destruction project without further testing”? At least 14 different companies stated that they could and indicated a willingness to participate in the project. Despite this it has been recommended that this test be completed by the summer.

In the interim Canada and Ukraine have been working together to try to move this project along. Our expectation is that whatever technology is finally selected can be used in any country that is holding these mines.

UNDP has been asked to manage this project for us and any other donors. They were asked because of their expertise in managing difficult projects and the fact that they are an acceptable agency to any potential donors. UNDP have agreed.

An assessment mission was conducted in July and UNDP have developed a draft concept paper that should be finalized shortly.

While the Geneva Centre Phase Two study is being completed our next steps are to secure donor funding, develop the project documentation such as tendering documents and the like and issue a contract. Commercial bids received by UNDP will be evaluated in two ways. There would first be a technical evaluation of the responses to the tender bid. The Geneva Centre would lead this evaluation with technical experts brought in from a number of different countries. The Geneva Centre would then pass its recommendations to UNDP who would carry out the project. It is only when this process has been completed that we will know the true cost to destroy these mines.

Neither Canada nor UNDP expect that donor money will be forthcoming without some more formal commitment on the part of Ukraine to ratify. A formula for that ratification will be discussed in Ukraine next week.

That concludes what has been a hopefully a not too painful and brief update on this project. I would be happy to take any questions either here or in the corridors.