

Statement of the United States of America at the Meeting of the Standing
Committee Meeting on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education, and Mine Action
Technologies, 22 June 2004

Delivered by Richard G. Kidd IV

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address this body and express my country's appreciation to the states of Canada, Austria, France, and Kenya for making the special effort to encourage and welcome U.S. participation at this event.

The U.S. has always been, and will remain a strong supporter of Humanitarian Mine Action. We share common causes with all of those who wish to reduce the harm inflicted by landmines. This year alone, our country will-including special supplementary funds for Iraq and Afghanistan- provide nearly \$200 million to support Humanitarian Mine Action. In 2005 resources available to the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement within the State Department will total \$70 million. In making decisions on how to allocate these resources, we expect potential recipients to propose sound national strategies for investment, not charity. Strategies should include clearly articulated visions and precise, measurable objectives. To this end, we feel that the format that has been prepared for "Communicating Elements of Plans to Implement Article 5" is exactly the type of practical, focused measure that can form the basis for future cooperation.

The U.S. also supports the concept that mine action should be responsive to and informed by development priorities. Progress should not be measured simply by the number of mines destroyed or area cleared, but rather in terms of social and economic benefits such as casualties reduced and food production restored. Still, a purely developmental approach risks reducing Humanitarian Mine Action to a single, simple cost-benefit analysis. While in some locations the rate of return on mine clearance can be very high, many minefields are simply not worth the cost of clearance. Clearing these minefields will kill more deminers and cost more money than the cleared land will return. Separating out "high-impact" from "low-impact" minefields is central to our provision of resources for mine action programs and implementing partners. It is for this reason that our support is designed to help countries achieve a "mine-safe" or "mine impact-free" status, where resources are prioritized to meet the pressing humanitarian and economic concerns first.

We have found our presence at this intersessional meeting to be very helpful. We are carefully considering some form of presence in Nairobi, if such a presence is welcomed by others, can serve to advance progress in areas of mutual interest, and does not become a source of division or confrontation.

Thank You