

**Statement of Geneva Call
at the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction,
15th June 2005, Geneva**

**Mr. Co-Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen**

The case of Somalia illustrates the importance of engaging armed non-State actors in the mine ban.

In a failed state like Somalia, where there was no central government and little international presence, engaging the faction leaders has been crucial. This is what we at Geneva Call have been doing since 2002 and as to date, 17 former faction leaders, now members of the new Transitional Federal Government (TFG), have signed the Deed of Commitment. Engaging the faction leaders has prevented new mine use and elicited cooperation in mine action. Moreover, as we could hear from the TFG Deputy Prime Minister himself, it is also, now that the faction leaders have changed status and become state actors, preparing the ground for the accession of Somalia to the Ottawa Convention.

In this short presentation, I will not elaborate on the landmine situation prevailing in Somalia, his Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister has already provided a general overview of the problem. Instead, I will briefly address the stockpiles issue.

As has been said, Somalia is not a producer, but both antipersonnel and antitank mines are plentiful in Somalia. This is due to several factors:

1. With the disintegration of the regular army in 1991, large quantities of ammunition, including landmines, were either stolen or simply abandoned.
2. Landmines can also be bought from arms markets in Mogadishu and other towns.
3. Several neighbouring states have been accused of supplying factions with weapons, including landmines.

For all these reasons, many former faction leaders possess stocks of mines. Mr. Aideed just stated that he has 3'000 mines. Other signatories to the Deed of Commitment likewise declared stockpiles and provided Geneva Call with access to them. For example, in Puntland, Geneva Call last year had access to mines stocks held in a military camp near Garowe. Furthermore, in a transparency report we request each signatory to fulfil, similar to Article 7 for States Parties, Puntland reported to hold stockpiles in two other camps. In Gedo region, south Somalia, another signatory faction, the Somali National Front, reported having about 200 mines scattered in different caches, and sent us photographs of them. In Bay and Juba regions, local militia are said to possess several hundreds of mines.

Subsequently to the 2004 mission (whose report is available on www.genevacall.org), Geneva Call is currently in the process of collecting more information on these stockpiles and is exploring with the UNDP and other stakeholders how best to assist in their destruction. In some regions we are visiting, it is the first time a NGO had come to assess the landmine situation.

Stockpiles are a mixture of AP mines and AT mines manufactured in the former USSR, Eastern and Western European countries, Egypt and Pakistan. We have so far never heard of an Improvised Explosive Devices problem but we found that in certain areas explosives are extracted from AT mines and allegedly made available for sale and trafficking. The end use is unknown, though there are unverified allegations that explosives are used for stone extraction, digging rainwater catchments or recycled for military purposes. Moreover, some stocks of landmines are believed to be in the hands of “freelance” militia and private individuals.

UXO contamination is also widespread, ranging from artillery, tank and mortar rounds to rocket propelled, rifle and hand-grenades. Additionally, surface-to-air missiles, which belonged to the former Somali army, were found in a number of former military camps, notably near Mogadishu.

Thus, given the current situation in Somalia, we believe that the destruction of stockpiles should be considered as a priority. It is crucial to reduce landmines/UXO availability and prevent possible new use, especially now that the country is undergoing stabilisation and is expecting the deployment of an international peacekeeping force. Pursuant to the Deed of Commitment, many signatories such as the Deputy Prime Minister, have committed to destroy their stocks as quickly as possible and requested technical assistance to do so. We therefore urge the international community to build on this momentum and take the necessary action. Destroying stockpiles will help Somalia join the Ottawa Convention.

To conclude, I would like to highlight that the case of Somalia is by no means a unique situation. Stockpiles not under the control of states exist also in other countries, whether they are States Parties or not, in Sudan, Western Sahara or Burma for example. This issue is a global issue and it is important, pursuant article 46 of the Nairobi Action Plan, to continue to support mine action in areas under the control of non-state actors, particularly in areas under the control of non-state actors which have signed the Deed of Commitment of Geneva Call and thus agreed to abide by the Convention’s norms.

Thank you for your attention.