

CANADIAN STATEMENT TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON STOCKPILE DESTRUCTION - ASSISTANCE

Stockpile destruction along with universalization remains a vital component of mine action. It is only through destruction of stocks and ensuring no laying of mines through universalization that we will achieve our key goal of no new mine victims. Even with the ever-decreasing number of mines being produced by less and less states, there remains a risk of use until such time as all stocks are destroyed. If nothing else, stockpile destruction is a cost efficient and effective way of ensuring no more mines are placed in the ground.

While Canada does not have a specific budget for stockpile destruction it does have a specific program under the terms of Article Six of the Ottawa Convention to assist States Parties experiencing difficulty in meeting their obligation to destroy their stockpiles. That assistance has consisted of any combination of the provision of technical expertise, the provision of material and equipment and the provision of financial support.

Since 2000 Canada, either on a bi-lateral basis or in cooperation with other partners including regional and international organizations, has or is in the process of assisting 22 State Parties to destroy more than six and a quarter million stockpiled mines at a cost to Canada of almost seven and a half million dollars, so far. All of this in addition to our role in providing assistance in all of the other areas of mine action.

I would like to particularly note the project that is underway in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has an appalling problem with unsafe, surplus or damaged ammunition that is causing loss of life or injury to the people that live and work nearby. As many in the mine action community have recognized, it makes little sense to segregate and destroy mines while leaving thousands of tons of dangerous ammunition that can have an even greater impact on the safety of the population. In Afghanistan Canada has decided to support a much larger project for the segregation and ultimate disposal of munitions while still assisting Afghanistan in meeting its Article 4 obligations.

Since the first review conference Canada has assisted or is in the process of assisting six State Parties at a cost of more than five and a half million dollars.

In regards to the issue of the technology to destroy PFM mines, since 1999 Canada supported technical efforts to achieve this goal. In that regard Canada would especially like to mention that the European Union and Commission have been particularly active in resolving this technical challenge both in Ukraine and it is hoped, soon in Belarus.

Canada has not had difficulty in supporting stockpile destruction projects to this point but notes that some states still face regulatory difficulty in this regard. Canada is encouraged that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Co-operation Directorate has reaffirmed that stockpile destruction activities can be recognized as Official Development Assistance. In fact stockpile destruction is now considered “ODAable” for those States Parties eligible for this aid. This may be of interest to some States Parties who to this point have been unable to support this activity.