

Statement on Stockpile Destruction
16th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
20 December 2017



Thank you, Mr. President.

The requirement for the destruction of all stockpiles of antipersonnel mines, and the firm, relatively short deadline with no possibility for extension, are remarkable provisions in the Mine Ban Treaty, and have been remarkably implemented, with a few notable and regrettable exceptions.

Today, at least 157 of the 162 States Parties do not stockpile antipersonnel mines. This includes 92 states that have officially declared completion of stockpile destruction and 65 states that have declared they never possessed antipersonnel mines (except in some cases for training in detection and clearance techniques).

Collectively, States Parties have destroyed more than 53 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines, including more than 2.2 million destroyed in 2016.

We congratulate Belarus for completing the destruction of its stockpile in April this year, thus coming back into full compliance with its obligations. This was no small endeavor as Belarus possessed landmines that are especially difficult to destroy.

[Adjust based on statements] Three States Parties still collectively possess more than 5.5 million antipersonnel mines remaining to be destroyed: Ukraine, with 4.1 million, as well as Greece and Oman. Oman has committed to destroy its stockpile by its deadline of 1 February 2019 and has destroyed 30% of its stockpile.

[Adjust based on statements] Greece and Ukraine remain non-compliant with their obligation to destroy their stocks, now a decade-old status. We urge both states to accelerate their efforts.

It is uncertain if two other States Parties possess stocks. Tuvalu has not made an official declaration, but is not thought to possess antipersonnel mines. Somalia acknowledged that "large stocks are in the hands of former militias and private

individuals,” and that Somalia is “putting forth efforts to verify if in fact it holds antipersonnel mines in its stockpile.”

This preventive mine action has potentially saved millions of lives, as a mine never laid can never claim a victim. It has also potentially saved hundreds of millions of dollars, as it is much less costly to destroy a mine than it is to clear it, or to care for its victim. There is no question that the key to timely and successful stockpile destruction is political will; the determination to get the job done, and prioritize it accordingly. In nearly every case where a country has missed its deadline or come close to missing it, the problem has been that the state simply started too late, both in planning and execution.

This achievement must, however, be taken within the context of the global situation. The Landmine Monitor estimates that as many as 31 of the 35 states not party to the Mine Ban Treaty currently stockpile antipersonnel landmines. In 1999, the Monitor estimated that, collectively, states not party stockpiled about 160 million antipersonnel mines, but today the global total may be less than 50 million. Additionally, non-state armed groups and criminal groups in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, and Western Sahara are reported to possess stocks of factory-made antipersonnel mines or components to manufacture improvised landmines.

Finally, we would like to update States Parties of the status of the quantities of mines retained for training and research. A total of 71 States Parties have reported that they retain antipersonnel mines for training and research purposes, of which 37 retain more than 1,000 mines. Finland, Turkey, and Bangladesh each retain more than 12,000 mines.

On 18 September this year, Algeria destroyed the 5,970 antipersonnel mines it retained for training purposes, after completing its landmine clearance program. We encourage others to follow this example. There is no need to retain live mines for training, and certainly not thousands of them.

Thank you.