

NATO/PFP TRUST FUND POLICY

NATO's Role in the Destruction of Stockpiles of Anti-Personnel Landmines

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Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. In the context of this discussion on cooperation and assistance, it is a pleasure for me to provide you with an update on NATO's latest activities with respect to the destruction of stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines.

As you may recall, NATO has been involved in the destruction of landmine stockpiles since the establishment of the NATO/ Partnership for Peace Trust Fund Policy in September 2000. The Trust Fund Policy is, of course, a part of NATO's much larger PfP programme. It was set up to provide practical, tangible assistance to Partner Nations struggling to fulfil their commitments under the Ottawa Convention.

It was clear from the beginning that the Trust Fund would focus primarily on the destruction of landmine stockpiles, as there were already a great number of competent organisations and NGOs dealing with other aspects of mine action.

Over the years, the success of Trust Fund projects has led to several extensions of the policy. Although we now have a number of Trust Fund projects addressing a great range of problems from the destruction of small arms to the retraining of military personnel, the destruction of landmine stockpiles has nevertheless remained at the core of the Trust Fund Policy.

During the six years since the inception of the Trust Fund Policy, we have completed four projects that address the destruction of landmine stockpiles. The projects have varied in

size and complexity, but all of them have been completed on time, within budgets and without any safety-related accidents.

The Trust Fund has thus helped Partner Nations to destroy more than two million landmines in Albania, Ukraine, Moldova and Tajikistan. All of these projects, with the exception of Tajikistan, were carried out by the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency NAMSA. NAMSA has almost 50 years experience in international contracting and project management and has the requisite technical expertise that has been essential in the development of projects under the Trust Fund policy.

In Tajikistan the Trust Fund worked together with UNDP on a small project to complete the destruction of the country's remaining stockpile of landmines in 2004. This was the first time the Trust Fund collaborated with another international organisation and the results were very encouraging. We would certainly welcome more cooperation with other international organisations in our future projects.

Ten different Trust Fund projects are ongoing at the moment. Two of these projects deal with the destruction of landmines - one in Serbia and one in Belarus.

The project in Serbia was launched in late 2004 after Serbia and Montenegro had requested assistance from NATO to destroy the country's remaining stockpile of approximately 1,300,000 landmines. The stockpile was stored at 53 locations throughout Serbia and Montenegro and posed a potential threat to the safety and security of the region.

Implementation began in early 2005, with Canada and Austria acting as joint Lead Nations for the project. A number of other contributors, including Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland have since come forward to secure the total funding of approximately 1,7 million euros for this project.

As is the case with all the Trust Fund projects, the Host Nation is also expected to make a substantial contribution to the project. Serbia's contribution to the project has included provision of vehicles and labour for loading, transporting and off-loading mines, as well as logistic and office support to the NAMSA team in country. Cooperation between NATO and Serbia in this framework has been fruitful.

The project is now well underway. In fact, the 1 millionth mine was destroyed in Serbia last week in a specially arranged ceremony. NAMSA is currently proceeding with the task of destroying the remaining 300,000 mines. The work is expected to be completed in May 2007.

Included in that balance are 40,000 mines stored within Montenegro. We are confident that these remaining mines will be destroyed, as foreseen in the original project proposal, despite the recent split of the two countries. Negotiations on this matter with the two countries are ongoing.

We understand that the Balkans will be free of stockpiles of antipersonnel landmines once this Trust Fund project has been completed and we are proud that NATO has been a part of this important work.

If I can now move on to the other landmine Trust Fund project I mentioned earlier: Belarus.

In Belarus, the NATO Trust Fund project is assisting the country to complete the destruction of its anti-personnel landmine stockpile. As you know, Belarus acceded to the Ottawa Convention in 2003. It needs to destroy its remaining stockpile of approximately 4 million landmines by March 2008.

As Belarus lacks the financial and technical expertise in order to destroy these mines itself, it has requested assistance from a number of international organisations. The NATO Trust Fund was set up in response to this requirement in late 2004, with Canada as the Lead Nation with additional financial support from Lithuania.

Originally, the NATO Trust Fund in Belarus was intended to address the problem of the total stockpile of 4 million mines. However, after consultations with other international organisations, it was decided that the task would be divided into two parts: the NATO Trust Fund addressing the destruction of conventional landmines and the European Union dealing with the larger problem of so called PFM type mines in Belarus.

The NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency NAMSA is currently working together with the Belarus authorities to complete the task of demilitarizing the stockpile of 700,000

conventional landmines in the country by the end of this year. The project has progressed well and approximately 250,000 mines have been destroyed, demilitarized or converted to non-victim operated status already.

The project proposal also included demolition training for local military engineers, as well as facility improvements. Both of these tasks have already been completed. Environmental monitoring of the demolition area has also been carried out. As a rule, open detonation is avoided as much as possible in all Trust Fund projects because of environmental concerns. In all projects, we try to ensure that work is conducted to Western standards for environmental, health and safety issues. We also take great pains through full and real time management of projects to ensure that every aspect is transparent and verifiable. This ensures that donors not only know where their funds are being spent but also enables full oversight of all the activities of the project.

I would like to conclude by stating that we at NATO are very proud of the results we have achieved in the Trust Fund framework and we look forward to tackling future challenges with our Partners.

Thank you for your attention.