

**International Campaign to Ban Landmines
Statement on Stockpile Destruction**

**Eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
Dead Sea, Jordan**

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Delivered by Steve Goose, Human Rights Watch, Head of Delegation

Thank you for the floor.

Let me begin by stating that the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) strongly supports the proposed amendment to the Article 7 reporting format to facilitate reporting on stockpiled mines newly discovered after a state's destruction program has been completed. The proposed amendment responds to an issue that the ICBL has been highlighting for a number of years and is in keeping with the Nairobi Action Plan agreed to by States Parties at the First Review Conference in 2004.

While it may be late to change the text of the proposed new format, the ICBL believes that it is important that States Parties recognize and agree that the word "discovered" is a short-hand for a variety of things. States should report not just on newly found, previously unknown government stores of antipersonnel mines, but also on mines that are seized or captured from rebel groups, criminals, and others, and mines that are turned in to authorities by former combatants, civilians and others (as in demobilization or amnesty programs). So mines seized, captured, or turned in should also be considered as newly discovered mines and a state party's possession and destruction or other disposition of such mines should be reported.

Mr. President, there is no question that stockpile destruction is one of the great success stories of the Mine Ban Treaty. We now count 147 States Parties that do not have stockpiles, including Palau who just announced its accession yesterday. A total of 81 States Parties have completed stockpile destruction, and another 66 have reported never possessing stocks. All together, States Parties have destroyed nearly 42 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines, including about 2.3 million in the past year.

There are nine States Parties that still need to complete destruction, and they hold about 14 million antipersonnel mines. The total assumes that Ethiopia and Iraq have stockpiles, but they have not yet officially declared their inventories. We were pleased to hear just now updates from six of these nine (Belarus, Greece, Turkey, Sudan, Ukraine, and Indonesia), all but Burundi, Ethiopia, and Iraq.

We would like to offer our congratulations to the seven States Parties that have most recently concluded their stockpile destruction programs: Cyprus, Serbia, Montenegro,

Angola, Latvia, Cape Verde, and Afghanistan. This achievement is always deserving of recognition and applause.

However, it is disturbing that the latter two countries, Cape Verde and Afghanistan, did not meet their four-year deadlines. Each completed about eight months late. It is also disturbing that Belarus has informed us that it will not be able to meet its March 2008 deadline, and that it appears Ukraine will have serious difficulties as well. After such a stellar record of compliance up to now, it is essential that a negative pattern not be allowed to develop in the coming years.

The stockpile destruction deadline is a crucial treaty obligation. Missing that deadline is not the equivalent of being late with an annual Article 7 report. There is a reason why there is no allowance in the treaty for an extension of the stockpile destruction deadline, unlike the clearance deadline. Negotiators believed, and States Parties have confirmed over the past decade, that every state should be able to meet a four-year deadline with appropriate political will, planning and, if needed, assistance. Stockpile destruction is essential “preventive mine action” that not only concretely demonstrates full commitment to a comprehensive ban on antipersonnel mines, but also ensures no future use and no future victims.

Missing the deadline of this vital core obligation is a serious violation of the treaty and must be treated as such. Both stockpiling countries and other States Parties that can assist with destruction have responsibilities to ensure compliance. States Parties must pull out all the stops to make sure deadlines are met. We can understand that there might be extraordinary circumstances that cause a failure to meet the deadline. In its case, Afghanistan has described what we can all likely agree are extraordinary circumstances.

If a state misses the deadline, it must provide maximum transparency about the reasons for missing, and it must have in place concrete plans to complete destruction as soon as possible, with a definitive new deadline. Belarus has regularly informed States Parties about its difficulties, while Cape Verde had not even informed other States Parties that it possessed stockpiled mines. We discovered the existence and destruction of the stocks from a NATO publication, as the mines were destroyed during a NATO exercise. We were glad to hear this morning from the co-chair that Cape Verde has now formally acknowledged destruction, as this was not previously the case.

To reiterate, Mr. President, any state that misses its stockpile destruction deadline is in serious violation of the treaty and will remain so until it completes the task. Maximum transparency and concrete plans with a new definitive deadline are essential in this circumstance.

Another stockpile related issue is that of Claymore and OZM-72 antipersonnel mines. Both of these types of mines can typically be used in either command-detonated mode or victim-activated mode (the latter with a tripwire). Use in victim-activated mode is prohibited by the Mine Ban Treaty. Following numerous discussions on this issue in

earlier years, Standing Committee co-chairs have urged States Parties to take steps to ensure that the means for victim activation are permanently removed, and that armed forces are instructed as to their legal obligations regarding these types of mines. They have also urged that such steps be included in Article 7 reporting.

But, the best way to deal with these mines is to destroy them. During this past year, Belarus destroyed all of the victim-activated components of its Claymore-type and OZM-72 mines. Previously, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova destroyed their stocks of these mines.

Finally, we would like to point to a different kind of stockpile concern: those held by states not party to the Mine Ban Treaty. Landmine Monitor identifies 36 non-States Parties that have stockpiles of antipersonnel mines. Together, they hold more than 160 million antipersonnel mines in their arsenals. Most of those belong to a single country, China, with about 70 percent of the total (estimated 110 million). A handful of other big stockpilers account for nearly all of the rest: Russia (26.5 million), the United States (10.4 million), Pakistan (estimated 6 million), and India (estimated 4-5 million). These huge numbers reinforce the importance of universalizing the Mine Ban Treaty and firmly establishing a new international norm against the weapon, so that these millions of mines will never be used.

Thank you.