

Statement on Stockpiles Destruction and Mines Retained

5th Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty, Siem Reap, Cambodia 25-29 November 2024

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. In 1999, at the treaty's entry into force, this prospect seemed especially daunting as the Landmine Monitor estimated that as many as 130 states possessed stockpiles of antipersonnel mines. Since the entry-into-force of the Treaty, 94 States Parties have officially declared completing destruction of their stockpiles, collectively destroying more than 55 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines.

Among these destroyed mines were also those held previously by my own country – Algeria. Every destroyed mine means a potentially saved life or limb. As someone who was unlucky to step on a mine and as a result lost a leg – I call on all states who poses ap mines to destroy them and not let them to destroy people.

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.

Yet three States Parties still need to take actions to fulfill their obligation.

Two States Parties still hold a combined total of approximately 3.7 million antipersonnel mines: Ukraine (over 3 million) and Greece (some 300 thousands). Both countries are not in compliance with their Article 4 obligations, having missed their respective deadlines more than ten years ago.

Tuvalu is not thought to poses stockpiles, but is yet to make an official declaration by submitting its initial transparency report (due since 2012).

The ICBL recognizes that the three States Parties are not in willful violation of the treaty, and each has been trying to surmount particularly difficult technical, financial, and even legal hurdles.

While we commend the recent steps taken by Greece toward compliance and look forward to celebrating completion of its destruction process in the next few months, we must continue to press for urgency. Ukraine's situation remains complex, but we encourage creative, cooperative solutions that may include securing stocks for destruction in partner nations.

The ICBL continues to be concerned about the significant number of states retaining mines under Article 3. The ICBL and many States Parties have consistently questioned the need for live mines for training purposes. As reported by the 2024 Landmine Monitor, total of 63 States Parties retain antipersonnel landmines for training and research purposes. Finland tops the list with more than 15,000 mines, followed by Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Twenty-two more States Parties retain between 1,000 mines and 6,000 mines each. An additional 38 States Parties each retain fewer than 1,000 mines.

Another 100 States Parties do not retain any antipersonnel mines, including 45 states that stockpiled or retained landmines in the past. Slovakia initially declared 7,000 retained mines in 1999 and progressively reduced that number and this year reported it no longer retains antipersonnel mines

However, too many States Parties have not provided any indications that the mines are being actively used for the permitted purposes of training and development, which gives rise to concerns that the mines are in essence stockpiled and should be destroyed.

We welcome the latest language proposals in the Action Plan related to commitments on stockpile destruction and mines retained.

Finally, the ICBL continues to be concerned about stockpiles in states not yet party, since these mines present an even larger risk of being emplaced in the ground. This threat became all the more real with the US announcement of transfer of antipersonnel mines for Ukraine. The Monitor estimates that as many as 30 of the 33 states not party to the Mine Ban Treaty possess stockpiled antipersonnel landmines. In 1999, the Monitor estimated that, collectively, states not party stockpiled about 160 million antipersonnel mines. Today, the collective total in the stocks of states not party to the Mine Ban Treaty may be less than 50 million. This shows the importance of continuing our efforts to universalize the treaty and to stigmatize the weapon thoroughly.

Thank you.