

Statement on Mines Retained, 28 November 2008

ICBL Statement on Mines Retained for Research and Training (Article 3)

Ninth Meeting of the States Parties, 28 November 2008

Delivered by Tamar Gabelnick, Treaty Implementation Director

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines is still concerned that there is widespread abuse of the exception in Article 3 allowing retention of antipersonnel mines for training and development. We have two main areas of concern: the reasons behind the number of mines being retained and the lack of clarity on how they are being used.

First, it is unclear how most States Parties have determined the number of mines to retain, and it appears that many are keeping more than “the minimum number absolutely necessary,” as required by the treaty. There should be a detailed process for making that calculation, and the minimum number should be re-evaluated on a regular basis.

Of the 156 States Parties, 71 retain a total of approximately 207,000 antipersonnel mines*. We note the particularly large amount of mines kept by three countries - Bangladesh, Brazil, and Turkey – which account for 20% of all retained mines. Of these, only Brazil reported consuming mines in 2007. A further seven States Parties retain between 5,000 and 10,000 mines: Algeria, Australia, Belarus, Croatia, Greece, Serbia, and Sweden*. Of these, only three states consumed mines in 2007. The majority of States Parties that retain mines retain between 1,000 and 5,000 mines.

At least 80 States Parties, on the other hand, have chosen not to retain any antipersonnel mines. Suriname and Tajikistan joined this group by destroying all their antipersonnel mines previously retained for training. Other additions included Kuwait and São Tomé e Príncipe, which declared in their initial Article 7 reports that they will not retain mines.

Another positive development is the number of states that are reevaluating the number of mines kept and destroying a portion of them. Most recently, we were pleased to hear Algeria announce this week that they will destroy 9,000 of the 15,030 mines they were retaining. Ecuador, Thailand, Ukraine, and Zambia all recently destroyed over 1000 mines kept under Article 3 after they were no longer deemed necessary. Sudan, which completed its stockpile destruction in March 2008, decided to retain 4,979 mines instead of 10,000.

We strongly urge all States Parties retaining mines to explore available alternatives to using live mines for training and research activities, to continue to reflect on the minimum number of mines needed to conduct training and carry out development, and to destroy all those that are in excess of that number. We ask you not to retain any antipersonnel mines as a contingency for possible future needs, as opposed to demonstrated current needs.

The second major reason for concern is that we believe that many States Parties are not using mines retained under Article 3 for the permitted purposes. In most cases, programs for demining training or development involve the consumption (or destruction) of the mines being used for those purposes. Indeed in 2007, 35 States Parties reported consuming 14,758 mines for training and research purposes. For example, Sweden reported consuming almost 3,000 mines in training activities; Brazil reported the destruction of over 1000 mines, and Australia over a hundred.

On the other hand, there are a significant number of states that year after year report little to no consumption of retained mines. At least 38 States Parties did not report consuming any retained mines in 2007. Thirteen countries have not reported consuming any mines for permitted purposes since entry-into-force for that country (Angola, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Republic of Congo, Cyprus, Djibouti, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Serbia, Sudan, Togo, and Tunisia.)

There are also a large number of states that simply do not provide any information about the intended purposes and actual uses of mines retained in the expanded Form D. At our last count, only 15 States Parties made use of this form. We strongly encourage all States Parties retaining mines to be transparent about why they are retaining mines and how they are being used.

Finally, we call on all States Parties to pay closer attention to this issue. Stockpile destruction – as we heard loud and clear earlier this week – is a central tenant of the Mine Ban Treaty. Keeping mines under Article 3 that act as de facto stocks rather than training or development devices should be a concern to all States Parties.

* These figures are based on Algeria's new reported level of Article 3 mine retention.

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