

ICBL Statement on Stockpiles and Their Destruction
Third Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty
23 June 2014



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, 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, 87 States Parties have officially declared completing destruction of their stockpiles, collectively destroying more than 47 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines, including more than 250,000 antipersonnel mines destroyed in 2013.

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.

In 1999, there was a wide divergence of views among States Parties about the difficulty and costs of destroying antipersonnel mines. But, with the exception of the special case of PFM mines, it is clear that these early concerns were misplaced. Technical and financial issues have not been overwhelming obstacles for the vast majority of States Parties.

For nine States Parties, actions are still needed for them to fulfill their obligation. We foresee no obstacle for any of these states to meet the ICBL's "Completion Challenge."

Six of these states are known to possess nearly 11 million antipersonnel mines: Belarus, Finland, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Poland, and Ukraine. Finland and Poland are best placed fulfill the obligation the quickest, even by this year, given their capacities. All that is needed is political will. Somalia, while initially declaring not to possess any antipersonnel mines, is in the process of assessing and confirming whether any are currently possessed. Equatorial Guinea and Tuvalu, two States Parties that have not submitted initial transparency reports, have not made an official declaration, but are not thought to possess stockpiles.

Most important are the three States Parties that must come into compliance after having failed to complete the destruction of their stockpiles by their four-year deadline. We recognize that the three States Parties are not in willful violation of the treaty, none desire to maintain an operational stockpile of antipersonnel mines, and each has been trying to surmount particularly difficult technical, financial, and even legal hurdles. The efforts undertaken to destroy their mines are beginning to bear fruit with the recent opening of a destruction facility in Belarus and the destruction of over 50,000 antipersonnel mines by Greece. This is good news indeed. We

particularly welcome Greece's announcement that it plans to finish destruction by the end of 2015 in the spirit of the completion challenge.

On the other hand, the situation with Ukraine, both in the sense of securing funding as well as the turmoil authorities face, presents grave concerns about its will and ability to finish the job. It's not reassuring in the current political climate that mines are still not being destroyed in Ukraine. We call on the EU and Ukraine to finalize all necessary agreements so that funds promised since 2010 can be transferred and destruction can quickly begin.

The ICBL also has concerns about the possibility of there still being stockpiles in Yemen, Sudan, and South Sudan. Evidence of recent use of antipersonnel mines in those countries raises these concerns, although it is unclear who might exercise control over any remaining stocks.

Another concern is 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. Eighty-four States Parties have declared that they do not retain any antipersonnel mines, including 30 states that stockpiled antipersonnel mines in the past.

A total of 75 States Parties have reported that they retain a combined total of more than 169,000 antipersonnel mines for training and research purposes. Three (Finland, Turkey, and Bangladesh) have each retained more than 12,000 mines. Six retain between 5,000 and 7,000; 33 retain between 1,000 and 5,000; and, 33 retain less than 1,000.

On the positive side, since 1999 States Parties have destroyed more than 97,000 mines that were retained for training, including nearly 3,400 in 2013. Most were destroyed during training and research activities, but many were also destroyed when states re-assessed the number actually needed for permitted purposes.

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 mines that should be destroyed. The Cartagena Action Plan and the draft Maputo Action Plan have addressed this matter, and States Parties should confront it in a vigorous and transparent manner. In consideration of the ICBL's Completion Challenge we call on all States Parties to review their retention policies with the goal of destroying all retained mines within a decade, when we hope there will be no more need for training and research.

Finally, the ICBL continues to be concerned about stockpiles in states not yet party, since these mines present an even larger risk of being planted in the ground by a state military or non--state armed group. Up to 32 of the 36 states not party to the Mine Ban Treaty may still stockpile tens of millions antipersonnel mines, with the vast majority belonging to just two states: China and Russia. Encouragingly, some of these states have reported the destruction of some stockpiles since 1999. This shows the importance of continuing our efforts to universalize the treaty and to stigmatize the weapon thoroughly.

Thank you.