

REMARKS BY THE ZIMBABWE DELEGATION
ON THE NATIONAL STOCKPILE DESTRUCTION
OF ANTI PERSONNEL MINES AS WELL AS
PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The Co-chairs and Rapporteurs

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe, we wish to convey sincere congratulations to both the co-chairs, Malaysia and Slovakia and the rapporteurs Australia and Croatia for your appointment to steer the important Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction. We have confidence in your stewardship.

Mr co-chair, Zimbabwe, true to its promise during the Second Meeting of States Parties to Ottawa Convention, and in fulfilment of its obligations under Article 4 of Ottawa Convention, did destroy its entire inherited stockpile of anti-personnel mines on 15 November 2000.

The Zimbabwe Defence Forces, using its own resources and expertise, destroyed 3846 PMD6 and 246 R2 M2 anti-personnel mines that were declared in our report submitted in January 2000 to the United Nations Secretary General.

As per the report, only 700 Anti-Personnel were retained strictly for training purposes.

To show our genuineness and for purposes of accountability we invited several diplomatic missions, NGOs, the international press and interested observers resident in Zimbabwe and abroad to witness the actual destruction. The Government's invitation to other advocacy groups was sent across the globe, thanks to the generosity of ICBL, especially Suzan Walker who posted it on the ICBL website. The response and attendance was overwhelming.

As a further transparency measure, the implementation legislation that was passed recently by the Parliament of Zimbabwe, gives unfettered access, within the confines of the law, to any member or members of a fact-finding mission who for purposes of enforcing the Convention wish(es) to enter and inspect any place in Zimbabwe that has or may have the capacity to develop, produce or stockpile anti-personnel mines.

During the destruction process, we encountered some minor problems largely because the stockpile was small. We wish to point out a few areas;

- ◆ It was difficult to find an ideal destruction site to destroy large quantities of mines at once.
- ◆ Organising and adopting an effective method to destroy the mines requires funding, if we had stocks that were three or more times the amount we destroyed, it could have been difficult to achieve the objective without some assistance.

- ◆ One of the concerns in stockpile destruction is the impact on the environment of the resultant emissions and dust particles, especially if very large quantities are involved.

Our delegation has available a video recording of the destruction which we are free avail for distribution to other interested parties as a way of sharing our experience.

Although Zimbabwe has destroyed its stockpile, the greatest challenge that remains is the destruction or removal of mines in mined areas stretching for over 700 km (210 km²) that is a legacy from the independence war of the 1970s. Zimbabwe risks the danger of failing to comply with obligations of Article 5 of the Convention due to lack of financial resources to complete demining activities. We are appealing to the States Parties and the donor fraternity to consider investing in this worthwhile humanitarian cause aimed at putting an end to human suffering and needless loss of lives. Assistance is also needed in the treatment, care, rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine victims and survivors, mine awareness and other related programmes.

In conclusion, we also wish to add our voice to calls for the adoption of action-oriented decisions by the Intersessional Committees in order to advance the goals of the Convention. Action speaks louder than words and it is time we demonstrate this by talking less and practising what we preach. Thank you!!!
