

**Intervention by Stephen Goose, Head of Delegation,
International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)**

**To the Standing Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention
On Article 3**

16 May 2003

Article 3

We thank States Parties for the excellent exchange of views regarding Article 3 and mines retained for training or research and development purposes. We would like to provide some relevant statistics. A total of 63 States Parties have indicated they are retaining antipersonnel mines for permitted purposes; 54 States Parties are not retaining any mines (that number includes **Afghanistan**, which has just informed the Standing Committee that it does not intend to keep a single mine); the remaining States Parties have not yet indicated if they are retaining mines or not.

Of the 54 not retaining mines, 12 used to have stockpiles of AP mines. That includes Norway; we apologize to **Norway** for mistakenly indicating in our Landmine Monitor Fact Sheet that Norway is retaining mines, when of course it has often stated that it is not.

Of the 63 retaining AP mines, there are 6 State Parties keeping more than 10,000. Another 5 are retaining more than 5,000. Thirty-one are keeping between 1,000 and 5,000, and another 21 are keeping less than 1,000. Thus, State practice has clearly been in keeping with the common understanding from the Oslo negotiations that the requirement for keeping only the “minimum number absolutely necessary” means hundreds or thousands, and not tens of thousands. 83% of States Parties opting to retain AP mines are keeping less than 5,000.

There has been some disturbing news since the Standing Committee last met in February. Most notable is the case of **Turkmenistan**, which has reported that it has completed stockpile destruction, but intends to retain 69,200 antipersonnel mines. While we are pleased that Turkmenistan has reported destroying more than 1 million antipersonnel mines, the number retained is clearly far outside the norm. Indeed, it is an unacceptable number; we would contend it is an illegal number. It is obviously NOT the minimum number absolutely necessary, as required by the treaty; it could constitute an operational stockpile.

Our view is that Turkmenistan is in violation of a core obligation of the treaty. Its stockpile destruction deadline has passed, and it still has more than 69,000 antipersonnel mines in stocks. It is possible that Turkmenistan is unaware of or does not understand its obligations regarding stockpile destruction and retained mines; that it is not willfully in violation of the treaty. We are aware that a number of States Parties have already contacted Turkmenistan about this matter. It is important to engage in a dialogue

with Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan MUST drastically reduce the number of mines it has retained, and other States Parties must rise to this compliance challenge and respond effectively.

We were also not pleased to see that **Algeria** has decided to retain 15,030 antipersonnel mines. This is the fourth largest number of any State Party, and we do not as yet have an explanation from Algeria about why such a large number is required. We still await a clearer, more detailed description of requirements from **Brazil** (which at 16,543 is keeping the most mines after Turkmenistan) and **Bangladesh** (fifth largest at 15,000). We note that Bangladesh has said this number is under review; this is particularly important in that Bangladesh has just been named Co-Rapporteur of the Stockpile Destruction Standing Committee. Finally, it is regrettable that **Sweden**'s number of mines retained increased an additional 3,069 to 16,015 (third largest), with the apparent discovery of more mines at the Bofors Company. If the existence of these mines was unknown, surely it is not absolutely necessary to retain them.

We congratulate **Chile** for moving dramatically in the right direction, reducing the number retained from an initially contemplated 28,000 to 6,245. We have also been pleased to hear that **Zambia** has reversed its decision to retain its entire stock of 6,691 AP mines.

We again note the importance that the ICBL attaches to voluntary reporting under Article 7 on the intended purposes for mines retained, as well as the actual uses. We note that very few of the mines retained are actually being consumed, or used up. Only about a dozen countries have reported consumption of retained mines. For the vast majority of States Parties, the number retained has remained the same, year after year, instead of decreasing with use for permitted purposes. The ICBL believes that there is no need for retaining live mines for training purposes, a position also articulated by **Austria, New Zealand and Norway**.

In closing, the ICBL would like to stress the importance of reiteration and strengthening of the common understanding that the number of mines retained should be in the hundreds or thousands, not tens of thousands. The situation with Turkmenistan gives renewed urgency to this. States Parties should be prepared to make this understanding even more explicit and formal at either the 2003 Fifth Meeting of States Parties or at the 2004 Review Conference.